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*IN JENEN TAGEN AND EHE IM SCHATTEN: THE CHALLENGES OF  
VERGANGENHEITSBEWÄLTIGUNG  
IN POSTWAR GERMAN FILM*

BY

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## Introduction

In the shadows of the celebrated Weimar and New German Cinema eras, Rubble Films are regarded either as an unspectacular transition period or are ignored altogether. This has changed in recent years, first with the publication of Wolfgang Becker and Norbert Schöll's exhaustive 1995 survey, *In jenen Tagen: Wie der deutsche Nachkriegsfilm die Vergangenheit bewältigte...*, and more recently with Heide Fehrenbach's *Cinema in Democratizing Germany*. Lastly, Robert Shandley has added the most thorough, English language analysis to date with *Rubble Films*. The recent popularity of this era can perhaps be explained by timing: the New German Cinema has run its course and, ten years after reunification, interest in DEFA films has slowly begun to wane. With Weimar and Nazi-era cinema already well researched, Rubble Films are perhaps the only major era left to be "discovered." I prefer instead to think that these films are worth consideration on their own merit, particularly in the context of the time in which they were made.

What strikes me most about these films is that, so recently after the near total devastation of a country, with millions of lives lost and millions more displaced, anyone would be in the business of making a movie. That anyone could think about entertainment in the face of such immeasurable hardship—most had no food, no clean water, and no real shelter—was beyond my imagination. But these films are more than an entertaining diversion, just as they are more than a carefully crafted, socio-political message. Indeed, they are an attempt to be both.

That Rubble Film directors—Staudte, Käutner, Maetzig, and others—dared to address their situations, even in the most personal terms, seems to me an incredible feat of personal strength and magnanimous citizenship. Personal strength because they looked beyond their physical needs to express their most intimate sentiments; citizenship because they endeavored to

provide solace and inspiration to others who were suffering. They faced ominous psychological, sociological and political challenges, yet they persisted. Certainly, if they needed inspiration they needn't have looked far: Germany boasts a tradition of artists who intended to improve their contemporary, civil societies through enlightening and challenging works. This tradition ranges from Lessing's calls for religious tolerance to Brecht's designs for social equality, and would become evident in the films of the Rubble Years as well, as filmmakers endeavored to present a model for a new Germany and at the same time foster remembrance of the circumstances and realities of the old.

In reading about the talent Germany lost through emigration in the Thirties, I saw some familiar names—Billy Wilder, Fritz Lang—and some unknown to me. Max Ophuls was one of the latter, so I rented a film hoping to learn more about him and his work—only later did I realize that it was directed by his son, Marcel. The film, *Hotel Terminus*, is a documentary about the life of Klaus Barbie, a Gestapo Officer stationed in occupied Lyon, who was tried for crimes against humanity in the eighties for his actions in the war—some forty years earlier. It is a big production—Ophuls conducts several dozen interviews in several countries and in four different languages, spanning decades of world—as well as Barbie's personal—history. But many of those interviewed, whether they are French, German, or South American, remarked that too much time had passed since Barbie's crimes, and that the past should be left in the past. Barbie himself tells an interviewer with somewhat chilling irony that for him, “the past is buried.”

This rhetoric is easily applied to the whole of one of mankind's saddest chapters, including the shortages and distress of its aftermath, the Rubble Years: “Let the past go and focus on today, for certainly there is no lack of tragedy in the present.” Wars are waged and innocent people go without life's most basic necessities and there seems no end in sight. So, if

the past should be forgotten, what good is a paper about “coming to terms with it?” I believe it is exactly the fact that tragedies persist that helps us to appreciate the courage of the Rubble Years filmmakers—because we have even the smallest conception of how they were suffering, we can imagine what they overcame. Because the problems that bring war and disaster haven’t been resolved, these directors’ works can serve as an example for us to work through them today.

Additionally, I suggest that these films can serve to remind us that cinema is as equally valid a means of social commentary and of presenting ideas for improving civil society as Lessing’s and Brecht’s dramas were. Given today’s mass appeal of film and television, these media stand very much capable of, if not effecting social change, then at least generating the discussion and debate upon which such change might be based. In light of what is perhaps a new uncertainty about U.S. strategic foreign policy, and certainly a generally increased, popular interest in civic issues since the events of last fall, I believe that Rubble Films can serve as inspirations and in some regards, as models, for visual mass media to encourage reflection, remembrance, and hope. Perhaps modern-day Rubble Films will emerge in the United States, reiterating their German predecessors’ messages of compassion and tolerance, to encourage the social and political engagement that our country often lacks.

Certainly, it is not all rosy. The films discussed in this project are not ideal, as no films are. They are not perfect models of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, nor are they perfect guides to rebuilding society. They aren’t even exceptionally entertaining. But it is my hope that, in discussing them, I will increase our understanding of these films, and contribute to remembering the accomplishments of those who made them. Moreover, I would hope that all studies of the Rubble Years might stimulate thought about the role of art in society—both its role then, as well as its potential role now.

## Part I. What is *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*?

At the conclusion of World War II, the occupying powers began several projects, the goals of which had generally been established months before the fighting stopped.<sup>1</sup> One major initiative of the victors was the process of “denazification,” intended to ensure that National Socialism, and more broadly, fascism, were eradicated from all sectors of German society. Outlined in Article II. *The Principles To Govern The Treatment Of Germany In The Initial Control Period* of the Potsdam Agreement,<sup>2</sup>

All German land, naval and air forces, the SS., SA., SD., and Gestapo, with all their organizations, staffs and institutions, including the General Staff, the Officers' Corps, Reserve Corps, military schools, war veterans' organizations and all other military and semi-military organizations, together with all clubs and associations which serve to keep alive the military tradition in Germany, shall be completely and finally abolished in such manner as permanently to prevent the revival or reorganization of German militarism and Nazism;

Subsequent directives, particularly from the US State Department and from the Office of Military Government of the United States (OMGUS) indicate that denazification efforts were determined by two bureaucratic, objective-oriented criteria: they were required to be observable and measurable. Consequently, allied efforts to “denazify” Germany focused on the workplace, the entertainment industry, government at all levels, the military, and religious and secular social organizations. But, independent of these institutions, very little attention was paid to the Germans themselves. While much scrutiny was devoted to every echelon and sector of society, the individuals that comprise them were, in a sense, overlooked. The questionnaire developed by the Americans, for example, which was ostensibly intended to facilitate a personal, moral self-

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<sup>1</sup> See ‘Report of the Crimea (Yalta) Conference, 4-11 February 1945,’ in von Oppen’s *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945-1954*.

<sup>2</sup> See, among others, Wolfgang Benz’s *Deutschland seit 1945: Entwicklungen in der Bundesrepublik und in der DDR; Chronik, Dokumente, Bilder*. and the above referenced *Documents on Germany under Occupation, 1945-1954*.

assessment for individual Germans, addressed not the individual filling out the form, but that person's relationship to the previously mentioned organizations.<sup>3</sup> Because of the institution-focused approach to denazification, many Germans, as some observers perceived them, did not commit the psychological effort necessary to work through their involvement, however indirect, and the responsibility, however slight, in and for the events of their collective past.

As much as the first initiative—denazification—concerned ending one chapter of history, a second concerned starting the next, and beginning the physical reconstruction of bombed-out and rubble-strewn Germany. Although the United States considered leaving Germany to languish as an undeveloped, and powerless, agrarian state, President Truman ultimately rejected the so-called Morgenthau Plan<sup>4</sup> and adopted the Economic Recovery Act of 1948, or, as it is better known, the Marshall Plan. A naïve observer might regard rebuilding a former enemy as the century's most altruistic, even Christian, act, while cynics would conclude that reconstruction was pursued with the single purpose of restoring a large market for US commodities. The truth is eternally debatable, but lies perhaps somewhere in between.

Straddling these two initiatives was the effort, supported not only by the occupying forces but by many Germans as well, to ensure that the roots of fascist aggression and fanaticism had been wiped out not only with the criminal prosecution of the remaining Nazi leadership, but also through reeducation of the masses who had supported them. I describe this effort as “straddling” the two initiatives because it belongs wholly to neither initiative, but partly to both. The victors sought to address the causes of fascism in Germany, but addressed only its symptoms, mistakenly believing that through denazification and the corresponding eradication of Nazi

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<sup>3</sup> A copy of the questionnaire is available on pages 386-389 of Pleyer's *Deutscher Nachkriegsfilm 1946-1948*. Section headings include Nazi Party Affiliations, Nazi “Auxiliary” Organization Activities, Writings and Speeches, Employment, Income, Military Service, and Political Affiliations.

<sup>4</sup> Henry Morgenthau, Jr. served as US Treasury Secretary from 1934-1945.

institutions, they could ensure that aggression, fanaticism, and blind mass obedience did not occur again. Either through arrogance, ignorance, or a combination of both, the prevailing belief among the occupying forces was that the problem was specifically German.

An acceptance that the root causes of fascism were universally present in industrialized societies, as Frankfurt School theorists held, would have dramatically shifted the focus of denazification and made any effort to safeguard against the reemergence of fascism an inconceivably large undertaking. Moreover, such an acceptance would render impossible any development of observable and measurable initiatives—the previously described first initiative—because it would have overwhelmed those who endeavored to alter the state and course of industrialized societies. That is, by expanding the focus to include all societies with elements of fascism, there would be no focus at all. In the case of Western administrators and their governments, expanding the scope beyond Germany would be antithetical to desires to complete the occupation as quickly as possible.

Finally, any effort to address the root causes of Nazism would impede the second initiative in that a thorough exclusion of all individuals involved (to a more than casual extent) in the administration or function of the National Socialist regime and its organizations would greatly hamper reconstruction efforts because of the overwhelming personnel shortage it would create. Given the economic destitution of postwar Germany, one could hardly argue for restricting reconstruction for the sake of moral justice. By the war's end, some 7.1 million German soldiers and civilians were either killed or missing, and two million had been wounded (Glaser, 16). Between six and seven million Germans were listed as prisoners of war. Nine million people had been killed in concentration camps, while another 9.6 million had been forced into Germany and were trying to return to their homes. In many cases however, there were no

homes to return to: 2.25 million German homes were totally destroyed and another 2.5 million were damaged, leaving 400 million cubic meters of rubble and 3 million Germans homeless (Glaser, 16). Consequently, any measure which did not contribute to rescuing Germany's starving and homeless population would never have been furthered on the basis of its morality. Given this precarious position—at once required for genuine and thorough denazification, yet so exceedingly difficult and in conflict with the aims of economic and political reconstruction—efforts to ensure any thorough, societal working-through of the past were prevented. To be sure, many Germans faced significant psychological and sociological impediments to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, and, where the administrators failed, some Germans succeeded in recognizing the need to address the issues of the past on an individual basis.<sup>5</sup>

Three works addressed this issue with sufficient poignancy that they are routinely cited today: Karl Jaspers' book, *Die Schuldfrage*: (1946);<sup>6</sup> an essay first given as a radio address by Theodor Adorno, „Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?“ (1959); and Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlichs *Die Unfähigkeit zu Trauern* (1967). Each approaches the issues of Germany's past from a different perspective, owing to the time it was written and the intentions of its writers, though none overtly contradicts the arguments, assumptions or proposals of the others. Viewed collectively, these works form a composite of intellectual thought that provides insight, still half a century later, to the concerns and observations of postwar discourse.

The subtitle to Karl Jaspers' short 96-page text is “Ein Beitrag zur deutschen Frage,” implying that the *German* question can be limited to the collective responsibility of one nation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I do not mean to overstate this. Although social and economic conditions and the approach taken by military administrators made it exceedingly difficult, some Germans *were* able to engage in critical self-reflection.

<sup>6</sup> Two editions of *Die Schuldfrage* are available. My page numbers refer to the first edition.

<sup>7</sup> *Die Schuldfrage* was translated by E. B. Ashton as *The Question of German Guilt* (NY: Capricorn Books, 1961), but is perhaps more appropriately read as the *Question of German Responsibility*. Jaspers' book does not accuse or seek to place blame, but rather shows how postwar German citizens—as individuals—might work through their part

Jaspers argues—and, as I shall later show, Adorno and the Mitscherlichs concur—that the opposite is true: the tragedy of fascism and massive inhumanity is a human, not German, phenomenon. Adorno references fascistic tendencies and nationalism in developing countries (565), and the Mitscherlichs remind us of two previous tragedies against man in history, the Conquistador slaughter and oppression of indigenous Americans and, later, the American Negro slave-trade (Mitscherlich 29). Jaspers also argues against the concept of a “national character” as arbitrary and unreliable (65), but is careful not to relativize Germany’s tragedy among others. Having recognized the universal nature of humanity and inhumanity, he limits both the problem and the solution to Germans and Germany. Additionally, the subtitle presents the text not as *The Essay*, but rather *An Essay*, not presuming to be a definitive work, but intending it as a contribution among others. In his dissertation, “Intellectual Leadership and Cultural Renewal in Post-World War II Germany: Friedrich Meinecke, Thomas Mann And Karl Jaspers,” Mark Clark addresses the roles of each of these figures in their efforts to help in reconstructing Germany—whether sociologically, psychologically or both. More so than Meineke, who had officially retired from his position, and Mann, who fled to the United States, Jaspers endured professional and personal hardship during the Nazi years, most significantly because his wife was Jewish. As mentioned previously, Jaspers’ personal situation made him keenly aware of the difficulties post-war Germans faced, whether psychologically, morally, or simply in terms of physical survival. As such, *Die Schuldfrage* distinguishes itself from indiscriminate, Allied accusations of “You are guilty!” (25) and any similar, moralizing indictments. Rather, it is a thoughtful portrayal of empathy and collective renewal.

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in the tragedy of National Socialism. Accordingly, I will use *responsible* and its variants throughout my essay to reflect this non-accusatory tone, especially where Jaspers himself uses *Verantwortung haben*.

To accomplish this, Jaspers establishes himself as a coequal. He shares his empathy, consistently using the first person, both the singular, *I*, in explaining personal experience and his own feelings and plural, *we*, in discussing Germany and its people. The result of this is a seeming “how to” text that one feels is intended as much for the author himself as for any given reading audience. In this sense, *Die Schuldfrage* is as much an aid to his fellow citizens as it is an effort for Jaspers to exorcise his own demons. In concluding a section on the individual awareness of collective responsibility, Jaspers expresses his feelings of identification with Germans, past and present, explaining that he feels co-responsible. The argument creates a dialectic in which his rational denials of a national identity and insistence on individual reflection (18-19, 27-28)<sup>8</sup> oppose the emotions of a man deeply moved and very much affected by the actions of his nation. He concludes:

Es scheint, dass ich als Philosoph nun vollends ins Gefühl abgeglitten bin und den Begriff verloren habe. In der Tat hört die Sprache auf, und nur negativ ist zu erinnern, dass alle unsere Unterscheidungen, unbeschadet dessen dass wir sie für wahr halten und keineswegs rückgängig machen, nicht zum Ruhebett werden dürfen. Wir dürfen nicht mit ihnen die Sache erledigen und uns befreien von dem Druck, unter dem wir unseren Lebensweg weiter gehen, und durch den das Kostbarste zur Reife kommen soll, das ewige Wesen unserer Seele (58).

Having established his legitimacy for addressing such an emotionally sensitive and personal topic, Jaspers next seeks to make the past manageable by objectively categorizing what was otherwise emotionally and psychologically overwhelming. He appreciates the desire to move on and forget the past, writing,

Man mag nicht hören von Schuld, von Vergangenheit, man ist nicht betroffen von der Weltgeschichte. Man will einfach aufhören zu leiden, will heraus aus dem Elend, will

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<sup>8</sup> Regarding national identity, „Es ist auch sinnwidrig, ein Volk als Ganzes moralisch anzuklagen. Es gibt keinen Charakter eines Volkes derart, dass jeder einzelne der Volkszugehörigen diesen Charakter hätte“ (18), and „Ein Volk als ganzes gibt es nicht“ (19). Lastly, „Schließlich kann es bedeuten: Ihr seid als Volk minderwertig, würdelos, verbrecherisch, ein Auswurf der Menschheit, anders als all anderen Völker.—Das ist das Denken und Werten in Kollektiven, das mit seiner Subsumtion jedes einzelnen unter dies Allgemeine radikal falsch und selber unmenschlich ist, ob es in gutem oder bösem Sinne sich vollzieht“ (27-28).

leben, aber nicht nachdenken. Es ist eher eine Stimmung, als ob man nach so furchtbarem Leid gleichsam belohnt, jedenfalls getröstet werden müsste aber nicht noch mit Schuld beladen werden dürfte (7).

It is this very appreciation for the difficulty and trauma associated with addressing the past that encourages a greater willingness on the part of the average, German reader to consider Jaspers' argument. Having established his position as a coequal to the German people and recognized their (and his own) apprehension, Jaspers claims the need to seek the truth as a compulsion of human dignity (8). He approaches the past step by step, recognizing four categories of responsibility—criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical (See Appendix). For each, he addresses who can accuse, who can be accused, and what the penalty or penance is. By defining and working through each component separately, Jaspers gives a now-more-willing reader the means to reflect thoughtfully and work through his or her own responsibility—a responsibility that, particularly with regard to its moral component, is as unique and varied as the number of Germans working through it (41).

Parallel to Jaspers' discussion of managing the past, runs a secondary component in *Die Schuldfrage*—his thoughts on managing the (then) present, with specific regard for the Allied occupation and its administration and reconstruction of Germany. Here, Jaspers is occasionally critical, but always pragmatic in his consideration of Germany's situation.

Most closely related to his components of responsibility are the Nuremberg trials, which he addresses as the pursuit of justice in criminal responsibility. Jaspers appreciates various criticisms of them that his countrymen (at least hypothetically) made, addressing several reasons for rejection of the trials, particularly the concern for victor's justice, or any similar idea that "might makes right" (34-35). He rebuts each in turn, not as an endorsement of the Allies or

their actions, but in support of a new world order, positing that not only would justice for Germany be served, but that it marked the beginning of an era of universal justice (37-38).

More critical is his response to the Allied accusations of guilt, which Jaspers reminds his reader were the claims of placards posted throughout cities and towns in the summer of 1945 (25). The accusation is his starting point for leading the reader through a self-analysis in the four categories of responsibility, but presents a clear indictment that at least this component of denazification had failed. The poster explains neither who the accusers are, nor specifically of what the accused are guilty. Its picture shows a concentration camp, Belson, but, later in the text, Jaspers writes that such camps were largely domestic affairs, explaining that in 1944, monthly political arrests numbered 4,000 (60). He also explains that persecution of the Jews was never a national effort, but was limited to an active minority (72). This Allied method of irresponsible, generalized finger-pointing served only to arouse defensiveness (25), the very opposite of its intended purpose, leading Jaspers to conclude that only accusations and reflection from within oneself would suffice, “Jene Anklagen von außen sind nicht mehr unsere Sache” (27).

Jaspers’ second greatest criticism is of the victors’ division of Germany, which he perceives as punishment for the war, writing, “Weil wir als schuldig gelten, haben wir—so ist die Meinung—all das Unheil, das über uns gekommen ist und noch kommen wird, verdient. Hier liegt eine Rechtfertigung für die Politiker, die Deutschland zerstückeln seine Aufbaumöglichkeiten einschränken, es ohne Frieden in einem Zustand zwischen Leben und Sterben lassen” (26). Here, Jaspers is so completely focused on the German question that he cannot appreciate the developing, supranational, ideological struggle that his divided nation so clearly and thoroughly represents. Even in the chapter on guilt and the historical connection, Jaspers supports

depictions of Germany as the crossroads of Europe (63-65), but here refuses to address the implications of this role for postwar Germany: “Sie [die politischen Zusammenhänge des letzten halben Jahrhunderts] sind gewiß nicht gleichgültig für das, was in Deutschland möglich wurde. Ich werfe den Blick nur auf ein inneres, geistiges Weltphänomen” (65). He may well deplore the division of Germany and accept it as the consequence of German aggression—for having started and lost the war—but his comment betrays either an ignorance of postwar geopolitics—dividing Germany was at least as much the result of a burgeoning East-West ideological conflict as any concern for German rearmament—or suggest he possesses the very type of psychological profile that psychoanalysts, like Adorno and the Mitscherlichs, would later warn was the root of totalitarianism.

Jaspers’ prescription for working through the past is to encourage remembrance, in large part for the sake of preventing the reemergence of fascism not just in Germany, but elsewhere throughout the world. He explains that purification is not something to be done and forgotten, but rather the kind of personal transformation toward peacefulness that occurs throughout a lifetime, writing, “Reinigung ist vielmehr ein innerlicher Vorgang, die nie erledigt, sondern anhaltendes Selbstwerden ist” (94). Yet the ease with which he disregards the historical context of Germany, both past and present, and holds that it is unimportant, relative to the guilt question, is discomforting. Similarly, any reference to the country between 1933-1945 is referred to as “Hitler Germany.” While this may be nothing more than a form of shorthand used to describe a specific, historically-defined time period or condition, it might be more. I will shift attention here from Jaspers to the psychoanalysts who wrote after him, so that their observations might inform further analysis of *Die Schuldfrage*.

As discussed previously, Jaspers' text is well regarded, and widely read today, at least in the United States, in German studies courses that study various contributions to postwar, socio-philosophical discourse. This does not, however, indicate that the text had a significant impact on immediate, postwar Germany. My attempts to determine from the Karl Jaspers' Society of America and from the publisher which now has rights to his works, Patmos Verlag, the number of copies of *Die Schuldfrage* that were sold in Germany from its publication in 1946 to Adorno's address in 1959 have failed. Knowing the number of copies sold, however, still would not have answered very precisely how many Germans read the book completely and, among those, how many made serious efforts to apply his suggestions to their lives.

As early as 1959, some intellectuals observed, although conscientious of the danger of generalities and an admittedly unscientific approach to their observations,<sup>9</sup> that Germans as a nation had failed to work through the issues of their National Socialist past. While Theodor Adorno's „Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?” and the Mitscherlichs' *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* are similar in their subject as well as in their psychoanalytical methodology, significant, but not quite contradictory, differences remain.

In his 1959 radio address, Theodor Adorno presents the critique of post-industrial society he developed with Max Horkheimer in *Dialektik der Aufklärung* in the context of Germany's Nazi past. His argument is essentially as follows: in modern society, the mass culture industry and economic structures deny individuals the full development and expression of their egos—ultimately, individuals are unable to think of and for themselves as subjects, but instead see

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<sup>9</sup> I am referring here specifically to the Mitscherlichs' introduction.

themselves as objects. Rather than retaining their individuality, they seek satisfaction in identifying with the greater society, investing their egos in a collective narcissism.<sup>10</sup> He writes,

Die narzißtischen Triebregungen der Einzelnen, denen die verhärtete Welt immer weniger Befriedigung verspricht und die doch ungemindert fortbestehen, solange die Zivilisation ihnen sonst so viel versagt, finden Ersatzbefriedigung in der Identifikation mit dem Ganzen. Dieser kollektive Narzißmus ist durch den Zusammenbruch des Hitlerregimes aufs schwerste geschädigt worden. Seine Schädigung ereignete sich im Bereich der bloßen Tatsächlichkeit, ohne dass die Einzelnen sie sich bewusst gemacht hätten und dadurch mit ihr fertig geworden wären (563).<sup>11</sup>

Adorno claims that, because collective narcissism was only damaged, it remains, waiting to be restored. The object for which it waits is not dependent on any given political or economic ideology and can be seen to an extent in the phenomenon of the German *Wirtschaftswunder* and its claims of German efficiency (564). That any promise of restored and revalued collective narcissism might be accepted leads Adorno to conclude that authoritarianism, whether as fascism in some other form, could emerge again.

A significant component of his line of thinking includes the idea of an authoritarian personality. Adorno identifies the components of such personalities: “Vielmehr definieren sie Züge wie ein Denken nach den Dimensionen Macht-Ohnmacht, Starrheit und Reaktionsfähigkeit, Konventionalismus, Konformismus, Selbstbestimmung, …ein schwaches Ich...” (561-562). By positing that there is at least a measurable number of such personality types in Germany, Adorno can make a connection between his larger argument about objectivity in society and the specific occurrence of fascism in Germany. By extension then, any society where individuals’ egos are depleted risks the emergence of authoritarian power structures—a

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<sup>10</sup> For more on Adorno’s thoughts on collective narcissism under National Socialism, see Adorno, ‘Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda,’ *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, Eds Andrew Arato, and Eike Gebhardt. (NY: Continuum, 1982). 118-137.

<sup>11</sup> All citations to Adorno reference „Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit.“ *Gesammelte Schriften, Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft*, Band 10, Teil 2. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977. unless stated otherwise.

chilling thought that Adorno reinforces with references to unspecified developing countries (565).

The difficulty with this argument, however, is that discussion of personality types, particularly authoritarian personalities, is often problematic. First, such theories are impossible to conclusively verify or to extrapolate from individual characteristics to whole segments of a society or societies. Second, when theorists have applied personality types in the context of being characteristic of any given country or nation, their arguments risk being perceived as veiled racism. In his book, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, Daniel Goldhagen applies such an approach too simplistically, claiming that Germany was so fervently and violently anti-Semitic that the Holocaust was inevitable. The ensuing debate offers a good example of the passion such arguments can arouse.<sup>12</sup> With specific regard to Adorno's research, psychologist Peter Hofstätter reinterpreted Adorno's qualitative analysis in the Frankfurt Institute's *Gruppenexperiment*, and found that "by the study's own standards, only 15% of the participants could legitimately be considered authoritarian or undemocratic, a percentage fully comparable to that in any other Western country: there was no 'legacy of fascist ideology' in Germany..." (Adorno, *Critical Models* 338). Adorno argued in reply that Hofstätter's criticism indicated "an appeal to collective narcissism" (Ibid.). And so the debate continued, devolving into intellectualized name-calling that increasingly distanced itself from the social healing and compassion such research intends to foster.

No less challenging to the listener/ reader are the suggestions for working through the past that Adorno offers at the end. While one might expect him to suggest reeducation, as such,

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<sup>12</sup> See *Unwilling Germans? The Goldhagen Debate*, edited by Robert Shandley (Minnesota UP, 1998), Daniel Goldhagen's *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (NY: Knopf, 1996), and Christopher Browning's *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution* (NY: Harper Collins, 1998), which now features a revised afterword in response to Goldhagen's book, and suggests additional titles for reference.

he directs it not toward civic education, which he believes is undervalued (568), but toward psychoanalysis: “[Eine] genaue und unverwässerte Kenntnis [der Freudischen Theorie] ist aktueller als je” (569). This suggestion confounds the listener/ reader in two ways: first, he almost immediately follows this suggestion with an admission of the impracticality of such an endeavor. And second, he returns to his thesis about the root problem, “Die Gefahr ist objektiv; nicht primär in den Menschen gelegen” (568).<sup>13</sup> Adorno explains the connection between the two as such:

So wenig, allein schon des Zeitfaktors wegen, etwas wie eine Massenanalyse sich durchführen lässt, so heilsam wäre doch, fände strenge Psychoanalyse ihre institutionelle Stelle, ihren Einfluß auf das geistige Klima in Deutschland, auch wenn er bloß darin bestünde, dass er zur Selbstverständlichkeit wird, nicht nach außen zu schlagen, sondern über sich selbst und die eigene Beziehung zu denen zu reflektieren gegen die das verstockte Bewußtsein zu wüten pflegt (570).

The distinction between working toward psychological healing for its own sake and working towards it with the purpose of altering the subject-object dynamic of post-industrial society is subtle, but important: he views the results of any psychoanalytic processes as the means, rather than the ends toward Germany’s coming to terms with the past, or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Viewed in this way, working through the past—the very title of the article—becomes an ancillary objective. Certainly Adorno addresses the need to remember the tragedy of the past and honor the war’s victims,<sup>14</sup> but does not address it with the same urgency or importance as the need to prevent another such disaster.

That this emphasis is not the product of a more clearly presented argument begs an important question: for whom does he intend his message? Given both the scale of the endeavor

<sup>13</sup> See also p. 558, “Aus der allgemeinen gesellschaftlichen Situation weit eher als aus der Psychopathologie ist denn wohl das Vergessen des Nationalsozialismus zu begreifen.”

<sup>14</sup> Adorno’s choice of Goethe’s *Faust* in relating that the devil’s innermost principle of destroying memory is an interesting choice (557). First, the reference to Germany’s foremost national literary treasure seems less intended to make a clear, logical point, than to establish a (cultural) connection with the listener/ reader. Second, because Adorno was agnostic, there should be no devil. Interestingly, the Mitscherlichs also reference the play, characterizing Hitler and his hold on the masses as “nicht unfaustisch” (29).

and the consequences of failure, transforming society such that individuals retain strong egos should, one is inclined to think, benefit from the widest dissemination. With the reemergence of authoritarianism at stake, one certain, early victim of which would be free speech, one would expect Adorno to present his pleas as clearly as possible. Instead, Adorno doubts that many will be open to his message, proposing instead that cadres of enlightened citizens might emerge to lead the masses in a socio-psychological transformation (568-569). Taken together, Adorno's labyrinthine argument and the exclusive audience he believes it can (immediately) benefit, create a detached, almost clinical impression that too sharply contrasts with the compassion and solidarity of *Die Schuldfrage*.

Eight years later, psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich reintroduced many of the concerns Adorno had addressed.<sup>15</sup> Like Adorno, the Mitscherlichs observed political apathy, a massive lack of interest in history, and the defense mechanisms some used against the Nazi past and believed these trends indicated socio-psychological problems with Germans in general (16-17). Yet, while many of the observations are similar, the focus and purpose of the two texts are much different. Adorno used a psychoanalytic context to advance a sociological and political argument. Conversely, the Mitscherlichs represent their text as a look at the fundamentals of political life in Germany (7), but actual discussion of political phenomena only “bookends” their larger argument—a psychoanalytic assessment of postwar Germans.

Looking more closely at their psychoanalytic assessments, one sees a second distinction. Adorno emphasized collective narcissism as the dominant psychological factor in the rise of fascism, explaining that it was the result of a society of weak egos. The Mitscherlichs

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<sup>15</sup> See Karen Brecht's “In the Aftermath of Nazi-Germany: Alexander Mitscherlich and Psychoanalysis—Legend and Legacy” for biographical information about A. Mitscherlich and his significance to postwar psychoanalysis.

acknowledge the existence of collective narcissism and weak egos as well, but emphasize the substitution of Hitler as collective ego-ideal as the root problem. They write,

Die Unfähigkeit zur Trauer um den erlittenen Verlust des Führers ist das Ergebnis einer intensiven Abwehr von Schuld, Scham und Angst; sie gelingt durch den Rückzug bisher starker libidinöser Besetzungen... Als Anlaß zur Trauer wirkt übrigens nicht nur der Tod Adolf Hitlers als realer Person, sondern vor allem das Erlöschen seiner Repräsentanz als kollektives Ich-Ideal“ (34).

They claim that Hitler's promises of glory and power recalled childhood fantasies of wish-fulfillment and, especially, of omnipotence (36), adding, “Der psychologische Mechanismus, der einen Massenführer zum Sieg führt, ist dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass im Streit zwischen diesem alten Gewissen und dem fetischhaft geschmeichelten Ich-Ideal das Gewissen unterliegt“ (72). With Hitler as ego-ideal, any action that the regime endorsed was fully acceptable. His death accorded a return of the ego-ideal to the individual, whereupon those same actions resumed their former definitions as crimes—robbery, murder, and blackmail (32, 36). The trauma in realizing this was exacerbated two-fold. First, the same enemy whom many Germans had for several years believed was racially inferior to them was now occupying their country (77) and, rather than commiserating their loss or showing sympathy, this enemy was accusing them of being criminals. Second, the realization that they weren't all-powerful, but actually very much impotent and defenseless was an equally traumatic shock to their egos. The consequence of these severe and unexpected devaluations of their ego should have been melancholia, where grief over the loss of the individual would have brought a dangerously exceptional loss of self esteem (37). The Mitscherlichs contend that such a degree of melancholia would have been unbearable. Instead, many Germans severed all relations to this part of their past, although this was not an entirely conscious process: „Dieser Rückzug der

affektiven beabsichtigter Akt verstanden werden, sondern als ein unbewußt verlaufendes Geschehen, das nur wenig vom bewußten Ich mitgesteuert wird“ (38).

Returning then to *Die Schuldfrage*, one could see some evidence of this even in Jaspers’ perceptions of the past. By referring to “Hitler Germany,” as apart, presumably, from postwar Germany, his psychological economy retains exactly that separation which the Mitscherlichs contend is the primary defense against melancholia. Before concluding that Jaspers, paragon of “coming to terms with the past,” harbored unconscious defense mechanisms that ran cross-purpose to the very conscious beliefs he shared in *Die Schuldfrage*, let us look further at the Mitscherlichs’ argument.

The Mitscherlichs claim that a component problem in the infatuation with Hitler was in the way many Germans love—a narcissistic way that is primarily oriented toward reassuring one’s self worth (79). To this way of loving the Mitscherlichs attribute “eine lange Geschichte des [deutschen] Unglücks” and contend that it is a “kollektives Merkmal unseres Charakters” (*Ibid.*).<sup>16</sup> As previously noted, the Mitscherlichs were careful to explain in the introduction that their observations were not inclusive of all Germans and that there are significant restrictions associated with generalizations, regardless of their nature (9). And, while this caveat does not convey solidarity or evoke compassion to the degree represented in Jaspers’ text, it attempts to remove some of the intellectual distancing so inherent in Adorno’s address. Having established that, I suggest that it is an unnecessarily provocative claim that serves more to create defensiveness than further their argument. If, in the course of encouraging Germans to work through the past, Adorno failed because his argument was too complex or intellectualized, then the Mitscherlichs fail for having attacked their audience in terms that are unverifiable,

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<sup>16</sup> I have quoted these phrases in the original German to preserve the generalities that are made here, accepting that this sentence could be constructed more clearly.

indefensible and, even if true, unchangeable. Let's accept this claim as it is, however, and return our focus to narcissistic love, so that we can continue with their argument.

The Mitscherlichs claim that when the object of such love is removed, as in the case of Hitler's death, the individual feels as if awoken from a spell (74) and the object vanishes without a trace (80). The individual is then free to reengage in narcissistic love with new partner-objects, an example of which is the fervor and idealism with which East and West Germans embraced their new superpower guardians (80-81). Had these individuals possessed more fully developed egos that did not depend on narcissistic love to affirm themselves, they would have been able to appraise their (then) current governments more objectively.

Returning again to *Die Schuldfrage*, one sees that such “vehement idealization” is not the case at all (Mitscherlich 80). Although Jaspers accepts the victors, especially the tribunals they imposed, he is able to evaluate and criticize them and their governance. It should follow, then, that either Jaspers, despite the distinction he makes about “Hitler Germany” is not a typical German according to the Mitscherlich definition, or the Mitscherlichs’ assessment is not without exception. Neither case is verifiable, but I prefer to think that Jaspers, and countless many more like him, are the exception.

In discussing these texts, I hope to have provided the reader with a sense of the difficulties associated with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. These difficulties apply both to individuals in working through their own past as well as to those whose purpose was to lead and encourage others to do so. In the arts, postwar Germans created works that served both of these goals, expressing their personal feelings as individual survivors of a national tragedy, while also attempting to shape the new Germany that would emerge. German cinema, because of its mass appeal and because of the nature of watching movies, would be the broadest-reaching, and

arguably, the most influential, among them. In the next section, I will discuss the peculiar situation of the postwar German cinema industry and its reconstruction, ultimately leading to an analysis of two representative films.

## Part II. Reconstruction and Reeducation

### Nazi Cinema

Die Unterhaltung und die Beeinflussung sind in der Regel Ziele des Spielfilms.  
—Peter Pleyer<sup>17</sup>

As discussed in *Part I*, the goals of occupying Germany were reconstruction and reeducation. Not surprisingly, the means to achieve these goals varied with the ideology and philosophy of Germany's occupiers. While each occupying administration sought to establish democracy in the section of Germany it was assigned, how that democracy would take shape and ultimately function was more a reflection of the occupier's vision of democracy than of anything Germany might have chosen for itself. In order to guarantee the message that their version of democracy was preferable to any others, military administrators maintained tight control over all forms of mass communication. This was particularly true of the film industry; the reasons for which are twofold.

First, film was widely believed to have an overwhelming, psychological influence on its audience. Peter Pleyer's discussion of the movie environment well illustrates how the movie watching experience was perceived, explaining that the viewer "besitzt nur selten die Fähigkeit, das Filmgeschehen nicht nur zu perzipieren, sondern auch gleichzeitig geistig zu verarbeiten und sich damit von den Vorgängen auf der Leinwand zu distanzieren. Der weitaus überwiegende Teil der Zuschauer erlebt einen Film emotional, er nimmt ihn unkontrolliert... ohne kritische Überprüfung" (Pleyer 13). The frequent inability to distance oneself from the events portrayed on the screen, and the way in which a film absorbs the viewer's attention and captivates them so thoroughly that they forget their very existence were phenomena unique to movies. Pleyer attributes this to the darkened conditions of the theater and the technical aspects of film

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<sup>17</sup> Pleyer, 13.

cinematography—most notably the ability to vary the distance to the filmed subject, camera movement, unusual perspectives, montage, and editing (Ibid.).

In his book, *Movies as Social Criticism*, I. C. Jarvie addresses the debate over whether and to what extent films influence their viewers, tracing its history from the earliest days of American cinema. Drawing from a study by Bauer and Bauer in 1960,<sup>18</sup> he concludes that, while films do influence their audiences, they do not create societies with measurably greater rates of criminality, passivity or mental illness (22). And, while almost a century of cinema history generally supports his claims that movies are relatively harmless, postwar administrators and the governments they represented had neither the luxury of this history, nor a willingness to wait for one. Instead they were at least partly influenced by social critics and film theorists, most notably Adorno and Kracauer, who held that the mass culture industry was a tool used to bond an otherwise fragmented society, the result of which was an increased tendency for societies to steer toward totalitarianism. Given this perception of cinema, occupying administrators were compelled to treat cinema as more than harmless entertainment.

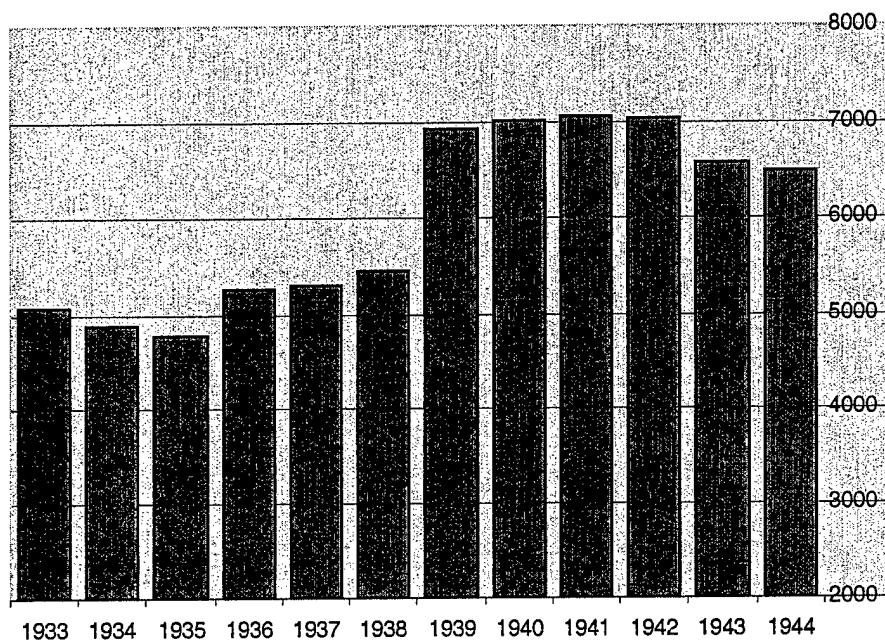
Equally responsible for the occupying forces' tight control of the film industry was the role cinema had played during the Nazi years. As explained above, many attributed the rise of totalitarianism (here, as fascism), at least in part to the mass culture industry, or more specifically, to mass deception propagated by Josef Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda, in which film had played a major role. The Nazi regime's belief in the influential power of film is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that the worse Germany's conditions became during the war years, the more money was diverted to the film industry and the greater an effort was made to keep movie

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<sup>18</sup> Jarvie cites Raymond Bauer and A. Bauer, "America, Mass Society and Mass Media," *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 16, pp. 3-66.

theaters open (Schulte-Sasse 32). Likewise, theater numbers grew rapidly with the economic boom instigated by the war, and then remained high until it ended:<sup>19</sup>

**Illustration 1: Theaters in Germany: 1933-1944**



Schulte-Sasse explains the appeal of Nazi cinema, claiming that it created an illusion of wholeness in Germany to generate a sense of national unity and accord. She writes, “Nazi spectacle fulfills the all-important, positive function of renewing the sensations described by Hitler, of incessantly reinforcing an imaginary collective identity via rituals sustaining the illusion of social harmony...It negates social negativity and a reasonable social and political discourse” (28). She explains that the vast majority of movies made during the Nazi years were not overt propaganda,<sup>20</sup> although they served a specific, political purpose and were very much a

<sup>19</sup> Graph is a composite of data available from Prinzler, *Chronik des Deutschen Films*, pp. 102-186. Cinema attendance grew (and declined) correspondingly, exceeding a billion admissions in 1942, 1943, and 1944.

<sup>20</sup> Rentschler estimates that 941 of 1094 films were genre productions; 523 of which were musicals or comedies. Leiser notes, “Of the 1,150 feature film made by the Third Reich, only about one sixth constituted direct political propaganda.”

tool of the Nazi leadership, which controlled every aspect of film development. In his book *Ministry of Illusion*, Eric Rentschler argues a similar line, building his discussion of Nazi cinema on five premises, three of which are relevant to this discussion:

Premise 1: The cinema of the Third Reich is to be seen in the context of a totalitarian state's concerted attempt to create a culture industry in the service of mass deception. Film production in the Third Reich... demonstrates how a state apparatus consciously set out to administer the making and partaking of cinematic sights and sounds (16).

Premise 2: Entertainment played a crucial political role in Nazi culture. The era's many genre films maintained the appearance of escapist vehicles and innocent recreations while functioning within a larger program (*Ibid.*).

Premise 3: Nazi film's political effect, then, is not just the simple function of explicit propaganda transmitted by dialogue, what critics refer to as the "message" or "manifest meaning." What is far more crucial is the polyphonic way in which Nazi films channel perception and render reality, how images and sounds work in a variety of modalities to account for the entire spectrum of human experience, presenting a world view that literally seeks to encompass—and control—everything (20-21).

While both scholars are keen to portray their research as a look beyond the rhetoric of propaganda and genre film in previous studies, such as Leiser's *Nazi Cinema* or David Stewart Hull's *Film in the Third Reich*, neither deny the effect Nazi cinema had on how German film and other mass media of the era are perceived. By appropriating the entire film industry—selecting and monitoring treatments and screenplays, and controlling all elements of production and distribution—the Nazi government made even the most apolitical drama and the most lighthearted comedy the tools of its illusion, making them, therefore, inherently political.

As a consequence of the politicization of cinema as well as the common perception of film's ability to influence audiences, the occupying forces established strict controls over the film industry: first, when they occupied Germany by shutting all down all of its elements—production, distribution, exhibition—and then during reconstruction by controlling its reconstitution. It is my belief that, although the Western and Soviet administrators began film industry reconstruction in ways that then appeared quite dissimilar, they had much in common.

Moreover, the control of each zone's film industry—that is, the degree to which film production and content were scrutinized—looked not unlike the scrutiny of the Nazi era. I will show that in both the East and the West, although at different times and to different ends, the administrators' goals of reconstruction would clash with their goals of reeducation and prevent filmmakers from creating genuinely free expressions as artists. Consequently, the goals of reconstruction, which were increasingly determined by the rapidly-evolving, postwar political climate, discouraged a filmic *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*—whether by filmmakers as artistic expression or by their audiences, who might otherwise have been inspired by that expression and engaged in their own self-reflection in a manner similar to what Jaspers proposed and the Mitscherlichs later found so lacking.

### The Western Zones<sup>21</sup>

In the areas occupied by the West, particularly in the American zone, the preferred mass medium for reeducation was newspapers, although two American-produced films were made for that purpose: *KZ* and *Die Todesmühlen*. Shown in mid-1945 and early 1946, respectively, these documentary-style short films portrayed some of the war's worst atrocities, the intent of which was to coerce German viewers into feelings of guilt. Recalling Jaspers' justifiable indignation at

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<sup>21</sup> Western Zones refer to areas under the authority of the US, Britain and France. The Eastern Zone was the area controlled by the Soviet Union. As decided by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin, in Teheran, Nov 1943, and Yalta, Feb 1945, Germany was divided into four occupation zones (Glaser 27):

- a. The US Zone consisted of the Hessen-Nassau province; Hessen (except the area left of the Rhein); Bavaria (except the Pfalz); Württemberg and Baden, north of the Karlsruhe-Stuttgart-Ulm Autobahn-line; and Bremen.
- b. The British Zone consisted of Schleswig-Holstein; Hannover and Westphalia; the northern part of the Rhine province including Aachen, Düsseldorf, and Cologne; Oldenburg, Brunschweig, Lippe and Schaumburg-Lippe; and Hamburg.
- c. The French Zone consisted of the southern part of the Rhine province including Koblenz and Trier; the area left of the Rhein, the four districts of the Hessen-Nassau province between the Westerwald and Taunus, the southern regions of Baden and Württemberg with the Prussian enclave Hohenzollern, the Bavarian Pfalz; the Saar region and Lindau am Bodensee.
- d. The Soviet Zone consisted of East Prussia, Grenzmark, Posen-Westprussia, Lower and Upper Silesia, Pomerania, Brandenburg and Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, and Mecklenberg.
- e. Berlin was divided into a fifth zone and governed by each of the four occupying powers.

the posters that moralized, “You are Guilty!”<sup>22</sup> it is not surprising that these films met with a range of almost only negative responses, particularly incredulity and resentment. In fact, they were so exceedingly unsuccessful that, including areas where proof of viewing them was a requirement to receive food rations, general movie attendance declined dramatically (Hoenisch 284). Such strong disapproval becomes all the more remarkable when one considers that, at that time, Germans were severely malnourished: the average German man weighed only 112 pounds and received as little as 800 calories a day (2,200 calories is considered the minimum daily requirement) (Glaser 69).

Given the sense that film as a reeducation medium had failed (at least when endeavored by the administrators), Western reconstruction of the film industry was begun primarily to keep pace with the Soviets, who had readily embraced film. Having shut down the film industry on 24 Nov 44 with US Forces’ Law No. 191, *Control of Publications, Radio Broadcasting, News Services, Films, Theatres and Music and Prohibition of Activities of the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*,<sup>23</sup> the Office of Military Government of the United States (OMGUS) next issued a series of regulations to establish which old German films could be shown, which Germans could produce new films, and what those new films could be about.<sup>24</sup>

Western administrators required that anyone wishing to direct, produce or distribute a film must have a license, the purpose of which was to prevent “guilty” filmmakers—that is, those who had worked during the Nazi era—from continuing pro-Nazi filmmaking. A US Information Control Division (ICD) memorandum from November 24, 1945 addresses this

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<sup>22</sup> See page 6 of this project.

<sup>23</sup> Law No. 191 prohibited “the production, distribution, sale and commercial lending” of all motion picture films, the operation of all cinemas and film studios, and the presentation of any films (US Zone Eastern Military District, 30-31). It was amended on 12 May 1945 (Pleyer 19).

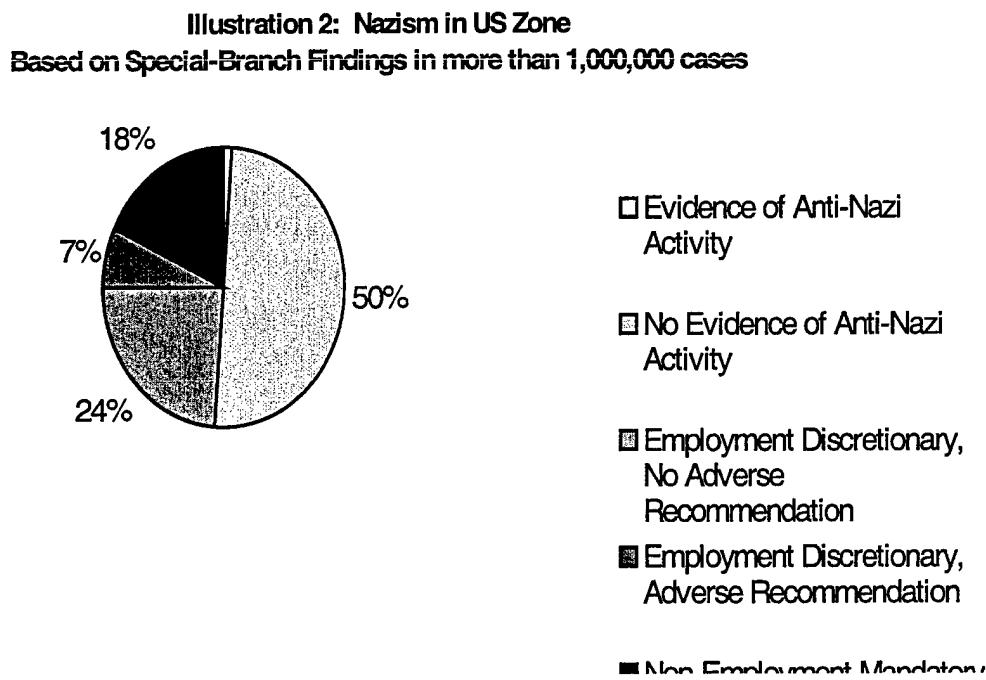
<sup>24</sup> Taking a cue from Peter Pleyer, who explains that “amerikanische, britische, französische Nachrichtenkontrollbehörden verfolgten mit ihrer Tätigkeit die gleichen Ziele und die Auswirkungen ihrer Arbeit differierten nur in Einzelheiten” (24), I will limit my discussion of Western zones to the US wherever appropriate.

policy, relying on the not very subtle, color-coded scale of white, gray, and black to indicate a person's presumed or actual culpability for involvement during the Nazi years:

Licensed producers should not only be politically white or at least bright gray, but should be as professionally competent as possible. Most important of all they should be men who instinctively think or respond to ideas along the lines of Allied policy in Germany, i.e., freedom and dignity of the individual, civic courage, the general democratic principle of the right and responsibility of the individual to think and act for himself in terms of the common good, anti-militaristic, anti-Prussianism, the responsibility a citizen for the policies and actions for his Government, free family and parent-child relationships, etc. (Fehrenbach 58-59)<sup>25</sup>

German citizens were assigned these grayscale descriptions in large part through the questionnaires they answered (see *Part I*, page 2), as well as by having other Germans, particularly esteemed or otherwise well-regarded members of the new society, vouch for them.

The chart below is taken from a Mar 15, 1946 *Status Report on Military Government of Germany, US Zone*, by OMGUS.



<sup>25</sup> Fehrenbach cites OMGUS Papers, DO-ISD #15, memorandum from William D. Patterson, chief of film production, to Heinz Roemheld, chief, FTM Brach, 24 November 1945.

While 75% of Germans, according to this diagram, would have no problem gaining employment in an OMGUS administered, postwar society (assuming jobs were even available), a full 25% bore the stigma of an adverse recommendation (7%) or were listed as Non-Employment Mandatory (18%), that is, effectively blacklisted. The percentage of adversely recommended and unemployable Germans was certainly higher in the film industry, given the totality of state involvement during the Nazi years.

With this proportionately higher number of unemployable talent, coupled with the fact that several established directors had fled Germany during the war years—Max Ophüls and Otto Preminger were gone; William Dieterle, Frank Wisbar, Fritz Lang, Richard Oswald, Robert Siodmak would not return to Germany until later (Liehm & Liehm 78)—the film industry faced something approaching a shortage of artists.<sup>26</sup> While there were still many competent filmmakers available, Germany would not soon again boast the depth of film industry talent that distinguished it before the war as one of the world's best.

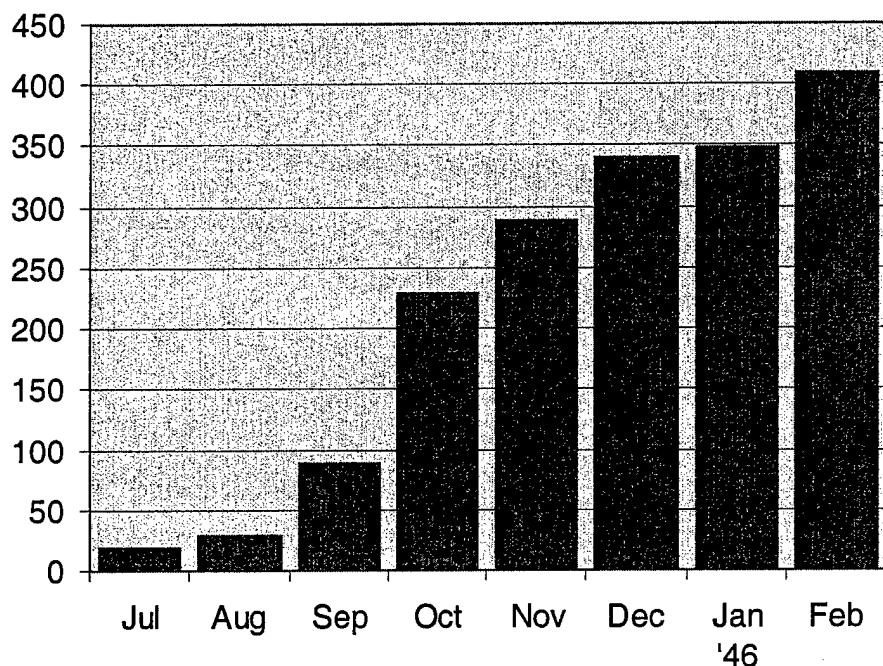
In addition to scrutinizing *who* made the films, the Western administrators also exercised strict control over subject matter. OMGUS administrators had been regularly showing American films—but in their original English—since July of 1945 in newly reopened, licensed theaters (see chart below).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> These names are intended to imply more the quantity of directors who had fled, not necessarily the quality. While many of Lang's works reflect a talent that is not easily replaced, I might not say the same for Wisbar, who directed *Strangler of the Swamp* (1945) and *The Devil Bat's Daughter* (1946).

<sup>27</sup> OMGUS *Status Report on Military Government of Germany, US Zone*. Mar 15, 1946. p. 26.

### Illustration 3: Motion Picture Houses Open



Their purpose was to convey "...to the people of the occupied areas an understanding of American life and democratic institutions" (Guback 128-129)<sup>28</sup> as well as to provide Germans with "some form of entertainment and ...warm shelter during the impending winter months" (Fehrenbach 54).<sup>29</sup>

Initially, finding sufficient, appropriate films to fill screen time proved difficult. First, Hollywood corporations were reluctant to donate or otherwise provide feature films expressly for the purpose of social (re)education. Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) Director Eric Johnston complained, "Hollywood is in the entertainment business...not in the business of

<sup>28</sup> Guback here quotes MPAA (Motion Picture Association of America) Director Eric Johnston speaking before the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate, as recorded in *Overseas Information Programs* (Wash., D.C.: GPO, 1953) p. 232.

<sup>29</sup> Here, Fehrenbach cites EP-USC, box B, #4, memorandum from control officer to chief, FTM Branch, 9 Oct 1946, and writes that "within the year, the MPB reported 730 functioning cinemas." This is almost twice as many as the data I found indicate (see graph and footnote above), but, if accurate, only further proves the point that US administrators worked quickly to open many cinemas.

grinding out pictures neatly labeled for use as weapons in the propaganda war" (Gruback 126).

Hollywood executives were also dissatisfied that OMGUS controlled all occupation-zone earnings, which were in *Reichsmarks* that only had value in Germany (129-130).

Second, Germans greatly preferred to see movies in their own language and that they could relate to. German and Austrian films such as *Die Grosse Freiheit #7* (1944) and *Episode* (1935), which had only moderate success during the Third Reich, became box office hits during occupation, once they were cleared by administrators for their content (Fehrenbach 61). By contrast, American films were criticized for their foreign backgrounds and carefree escapism—Germans couldn't identify the settings and scorned the insouciant, American attitudes that contrasted so starkly with Germany's austere living conditions. An OMGUS intelligence report noted, "...the whimsical *Tom, Dick and Harry* was a catastrophe for [the] local theater owner who said that it kept the audience away from the movies for three or four weeks afterward" (Ibid. 62).

Yielding to audience demands, OMGUS administrators began showing German films in December, 1945. A greater number of Hollywood films might have been available for ICD (Information Control Division) review, but, because OMGUS would not give the Hollywood majors the concessions they sought, no deal could be brokered. (Gruback 129). Thus, despite OMGUS administrators' clamoring for film titles to support their task of portraying democratic values and a free society—or even just to fill the screen and provide Germans with a pleasant distraction from the harshness of postwar life—the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEA) released only 43 films between July, 1945, and December 1946 (Ibid. 130).

A great deal has been written by respected cinema studies scholars about collusion between OMGUS and the MPEA, which represented Hollywood's eight largest film corporations

in all foreign markets. Typical arguments are presented as the counterpoint to the story of Soviet film industry reconstruction and the founding of DEFA, the *Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft*, and are passed off glibly without documentation or other proof, expecting the reader to accept these claims as established facts that are typical of American trade bullying. Christiane Mückenberger writes,<sup>30</sup> “Für sie [die sowjetische Besatzungsmacht] war er im Gegensatz zu den Amerikanern, die in ihrer Besatzungszone einen willkommenen Absatzmarkt für ihre Filme sahen, in erster Linie ein wichtiges Instrument zur erzieherischen Einwirkung” (22). Her point assumes that all Americans—both military and civilian, and each organization in occupied Germany that they represented—had the same intentions and acted consistently throughout the time of occupation, even as political conditions changed.

In reality, the situation was significantly more nuanced, as the OMGUS bureaucracy was frequently at loggerheads with the MPEA—while military administrators pursued films and other materials espousing democracy, corporate representatives were pursuing free market capitalism. When Hollywood’s major corporations finally did provide more films, they were tied to demands for help in dominating the German market. According to US Senate publication *Overseas Information Programs*, these demands “were so inconsistent with occupation policy” that OMGUS and the MPEA altogether “failed to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement” (Guback 129).

Klaus Kreimeier’s criticism of the West’s alleged plans to dominate the film market are more specific, but not much better supported, “Vor allem die USA und Frankreich (sie exportieren von 1945 bis Mitte 1949 213 bzw. 207 Filme nach Deutschland—gegenüber nur 169 Filmen aus Großbritannien) sind daran interessiert, Kapitalkonzentration und Monopolbildungen

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<sup>30</sup> Mückenberger makes argument in both her book, >>*Sie sehen selbst, sie hören selbst...*<<, and her article, “The Anti-Fascist Past in DEFA Films,” pages 58-76, in Sean Allan and John Sandford’s *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992*.

zu verhindern, um die inländische Konkurrenz niederzuhalten“ (30-31). Kreimeier contends that the US policy against cartels (*Monopolbildungen*) was rooted in an orchestrated effort to inhibit German film industry reconstruction, but two much less nefarious reasons explain this. First, the policy reflected Hollywood’s own history and organization, as it had been forcibly “decartelized” in the 1940s (Fehrenbach 52-53). OMGUS administrators believed that by structuring the German film industry using Hollywood as a model, they would be more likely to create something that approached, and could eventually compete with, Hollywood’s success. Second, recalling its task of societal denazification, OMGUS administrators sought to prevent a future, German government from controlling the film (or any other mass communication) industry, and believed that by preventing the formation of cartels or other vertical integration, they could guard against fascism returning in Germany.

Any film that was shown in the American zone had to be approved by censors at the ICD, whether it was a previously released German film, or imported from the US or another foreign country.<sup>31</sup> The requirements were self-evident, forbidding films that espoused national socialism, fascism, or race differences; idealized war and militarism; misrepresented German history; esteemed the German army; portrayed contempt for or ridiculed the Allies, their governments and leaders; suggested thoughts of German revenge; ridiculed religious sentiment; or idealized the thoughts or actions of imperial German political leaders. Also forbidden were films based on the books or manuscripts of Nazi party members or whose producer, director,

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<sup>31</sup> An important exception to the West’s otherwise very similar conduct in film industry reconstruction: in the British Zone, Ordnance No. 109 (dated October 15, 1947) included Germans in the process of reviewing suitable films, affording them a voice in which films were censored (Clemens 260). They were drawn from members of the film industry, the public at large and included at least one educator (Pleyer 21). I suggest that this prudent, self-determinant way of transitioning the industry is at least partly responsible for Britain’s not being included in (particularly Kreimeier’s) accusations of trying to dominate/ exploit the German film market.

author, screenwriter, editor, actors, or score/ soundtrack composers were recognized Nazi party members or supporters (Pleyer 25-26).

The review process became particularly important when, in an effort to increase the total number of films available, Directive No. 55 began an exchange program between the occupation zones (Pleyer 22).<sup>32</sup> As the data below indicate,<sup>33</sup> ideological boundaries were already having a marked effect on which films were reviewed, and underscore how extraordinary it was for German film *Ehe im Schatten* (1947) to open on October 3, 1947 in all zones simultaneously.

**Illustration 4: Film Review and Censorship by Sector**

	Total Films	American censors			British censors			French censors		
		ACC	REJ	NR	ACC	REJ	NR	ACC	REJ	NR
Germany before 1945	931	306	0	625	504	282	145	389	2	540
Germany after 1945	83	73	0	10	64	0	19	65	0	18
England	169	89	0	80	137	26	3	86	1	82
France	207	89	0	118	126	2	77	120	25	62
USSR	21	0	0	21	9	1	10	9	4	8
USA	213	194	0	19	150	1	62	118	1	94
All films	1878	845	0	1033	1182	339	351	888	39	951

ACC= Accepted      REJ= Rejected      NR= Not Reviewed

While British and French censors rejected 339 and 39 films respectively, their US counterparts rejected none, owing to a practice of reviewing only those films that they already expected to find acceptable. Also, while the British and French accepted almost half of the Soviet Union's 21 films, the US didn't review even one. Such Cold War animosity was exacerbated by OMGUS perceptions that the East's newly founded DEFA was luring the film

<sup>32</sup> This directive, issued on June 25, 1947, also included printed materials.

<sup>33</sup> This data is an excerpt from a similar table, Pleyer, 26-27. British censors twice reviewed three British, two French and one Soviet film(s), reaching a "split decision" for each that, in the interest of clarity, I have not included in the table.

industry's talent away.<sup>34</sup> This fear of losing resources trumped the fear of film being misused as propaganda, and emerged as a significant factor in the OMGUS decision to finally allow licensing for German film production.

Also responsible for OMGUS eventually allowing Germans to make their own films was the realization that, while the US use of films for reeducation had failed—first through the poorly conceived propaganda films, and then through the difficulties in dealing with a profit-minded Hollywood—the Germans themselves might prove more capable. Motion Picture Board Director Erich Pommer made the case to ICD Chief, Brigadier General McClure,

There is no better way to counteract the long years of Nazi propaganda than to have carefully selected independent German film producers present to German audiences... documentaries and feature films dealing in entertainment form with their own problems, and striving in the future to imbue the German mind with new and better ideas and ideals. It has long been [OMGUS's] belief and policy that Germans of sincere intent can do more than can foreigners. (Fehrenbach 64).

By licensing filmmakers, ICD could control the people involved; by supervising production and distribution, it could ensure suitable film content. In other words, by taking measures to guarantee that the misuse of film for propaganda by Germans did not reoccur, OMGUS administrators recreated very similar conditions of industry control and totalitarianism themselves.

It was not long before OMGUS administrators introduced plans for German film industry self-censorship, creating the German Film Producers' Association in early 1947 (Fehrenbach 75). This was the result of pressures from both within Germany and beyond. First, local German officials and church groups were dissatisfied with Allied censorship efforts, which focused on censoring elements of Nazism and militarism, while altogether ignoring elements that violated local, cultural norms and religious values (*Ibid.* 78). American administrators feared

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<sup>34</sup> Most of DEFA's directors lived in the Western sectors of Berlin (Shandley 18).

that, if values-based censorship was decentralized to local officials it would adversely affect film production values, placing an unacceptable financial strain on Germany's fledgling film concerns. Second, American administrators were cognizant of French and Soviet monopoly practices through the *Union Française Cinematographique* and DEFA, respectively, and feared that, in the event all four occupying governments could agree on plans for a unified Germany, film concerns in the American and British zones would be swallowed up, defeating OMGUS plans for a decartelized, German film industry (Ibid. 74). Owing more to the developing politics of the Cold War—particularly French and British dependence on US Marshall Plan dollars—and promises of church representation on the censorship board, than to any of the meetings and negotiations where American administrators pitched their plans, all parties—German filmmakers, the three Western military governments and state ministers of culture—eventually agreed upon the *Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft* by February of 1949 (Ibid. 89).

### **The Eastern Zone**

It suddenly dawned on me that I was one day older than the Thousand-Year Reich; I had survived it. And although we had no idea of what was going to happen, by the third day we had grasped one thing at least: this wasn't an end, it was a beginning.

—Wolfgang Kohlhaase<sup>35</sup>

By all measures, the Soviet Union initiated its reconstruction of the German film industry more successfully than its Western counterparts. This was in no small part the result of a different mindset of how to treat the German people. In the West, particularly among the Americans, leaders were convinced that Germans should be punished for the war, an example of which is the policy against fraternization. Soldiers were prohibited from contact with German citizens except on official business, a policy described in one memorandum from the commander

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<sup>35</sup> Wolfgang Kohlhaase, "DEFA: A Personal View." *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992*. Eds Sean Allan and John Sandford, p. 118.

of the US Army's 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, "I will allow no unofficial visits, no participation in social events, no handshaking" (Glaser 124). The reason for this separation is as ludicrous as the expectation that the order would be followed: "For you soldiers, it is still too early to distinguish between good and bad Germans" (Ibid.).

By contrast, the Soviets worked toward creating a sense of normalcy in Germany. The Soviet commander of Berlin allowed theaters, cinema and sport centers to open even before the war had ended—April 28, 1945—because they are "part of normal life" (Mückenberger 20). This sensibility carried into the film industry as well.<sup>36</sup> While administrators from each zone would use films in their reeducation programs, significant components of the Soviets' approach would distinguish it from their Western counterparts.

The Soviets' savvy is reflected in Pleyer's claims about the Soviets dubbing their films, as it would make them more enjoyable for viewers, the majority of whom, of course, did not speak Russian (Pleyer 31). Mückenberger describes the events somewhat differently, explaining that dubbing was more the result of entrepreneurship by German technicians who needed work and took advantage of the fact that the war had left the Tobis Film Studios in good condition. Their efforts began in the beginning of May, but weren't officially sanctioned until the month's end, as evidenced by a May 29, 1945 directive from Mayor von Treptow (Mückenberger 27). German workers began dubbing Soviet documentaries and newsreels on Jun 6, 1945, and feature films shortly thereafter (Ibid. 28). Regardless of who initiated these efforts, the Soviet Administrators' willingness to support them contrasts starkly with the Americans, who showed

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<sup>36</sup> The Soviets' approach to restoring German society should be considered one of *savvy*, rather than *compassion*. Although the efforts I describe reflect administrators with an appreciation for human nature, the Soviet wartime policy of violence against noncombatants, particularly against women, and the extensive materiel acquired after the war as reparation, prohibit mistaking their policies—taken as a whole—for compassion. See Sander and Johr (Eds.) *Befreier - Befreite Krieg, Vergewaltiger und Kinder*.

films in their original English. If, as I addressed above, the US intended to punish, then showing films the Germans couldn't understand would seem an odd means of doing so.

The Soviets' approach to occupation, particularly in matters of culture, is often attributed to the personal background or education of key Soviet Military Administration (SMAD) officers—that they were members of the “Leningrad Group,” Germanists, or both. The “Leningrad Group” described the more liberal-minded figures of the Soviet cultural, technical, and economic intelligentsia (Liehm & Liehm 76), and included Colonel Sergei Tulpanov, Chief Advisor, SMAD Cultural Affairs; his deputy, Lieutenant Colonel Dymshitz; Major Semowski, Censor of the Film section; Alfred Lindemann, General Director and Chief of Production, DEFA; and Lieutenant Colonel Auslender, from Soviet Headquarters in Berlin (Kersten 9). Among Cultural Officers who were avid Germanists: Colonel Tulpanov formed friendships with writers Wili Bredel and Friedrich Wolf during their service in the Red Army's 7<sup>th</sup> Propaganda Detachment; Major Dymshitz, who later became a professor of German Languages and Literatures at the University of Moscow, spent time in Germany before the war in 1933; and Lieutenant Colonel Fradkin was a specialist in German dramaturgy, who later published his research work on Bertolt Brecht (Mückenberger 20).

Under the guidance of these enlightened administrators and in stark contrast to their Western counterparts, SMAD elected to place much of the responsibility of reeducation on the Germans themselves. Accordingly, the German Central Administration for National Education was created on August 25, 1945, with German Paul Wandel as President and Herbert Volkmann as Chief of Cultural Affairs. During the war, Wandel had lived in the Soviet Union while Volkmann remained in Germany, working with the resistance group, Red Orchestra

(Mückenberger 22).<sup>37</sup> These men made film a priority in their reeducation program, soliciting filmmakers to report to the Central Administration in an August 1945 newspaper ad. If this wasn't clear enough, it was underscored by the Soviets on September 4, 1945, with SMAD Directive No. 51, which ordered anyone in the theater, music, dance, or film industry to register by October 1, 1945.

Because the Germans had just survived one totalitarian regime, one can imagine their trepidation at orders to report to military government officials based only on a given demographic. But, in many ways the Eastern Zone represented the best place for filmmakers to be: the Americans' made no secret of distrusting both film and the Germans, while the Soviets empowered Germans as leaders of their industry's reconstruction and were eager to begin production. Miserable economic conditions compounded the need to find employment quickly. Wolfgang Staudte's difficulty in shopping his treatment for *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (1946) provides a good example of the challenges that even a good filmmaker with a great script would encounter.

The story for *Die Mörder sind unter uns* takes place in Berlin, immediately after the war, where a doctor, Hans Mertens, is haunted by a wartime memory—the massacre of civilians ordered by his commanding officer. Mertens tries to escape this horror by binging on alcohol and showgirls, but his memory of the massacre has left him disconnected and debilitated. He lives in the apartment of a concentration camp survivor, Susanne, who, as the film's strongest figure, bears no scars—mental or physical—from her wartime experience. She determines to save Mertens from whatever it is that is causing him to suffer, but his memory won't allow the compassion of a friendship. When Mertens accidentally encounters his former commander,

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<sup>37</sup> Mückenbeger describes the Red Orchestra as “die illegale Gruppe Harnack-Schultze-Boysen-Havemann.” For more information, see *Resisting Hitler: Mildred Harnack and the Red Orchestra*, by Shareen Blair Brysac (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

Ferdinand Brückner, he learns Brückner has since become a successful industrialist with no feelings of remorse for the past. Mertens conspires to kill him in an act of vigilante justice, hoping perhaps to free himself of his painful memory of the massacre. In the final scene Mertens, pistol in hand, confronts Brückner, but the former commander has no remorse, shrugging, "...Da war doch Krieg, da waren doch ganz andere Verhältnisse! Was hab' ich denn heute damit zu tun?" (Pleyer 191). At the moment Mertens is about to shoot, Susanne rushes in and intervenes. As the couple leaves together, she maintains that they do not have the right to judge, to which Mertens counters, "Aber wir haben die Pflicht, Anklage zu erheben, Sühne zu fordern im Auftrag von Millionen unschuldig hingemordeter Menschen!" (Ibid.) The last shot is of Brückner repeatedly stating his innocence as the camera pulls back to reveal that he is now behind prison bars.

The film became a huge critical and financial success—the first German film released after the war, it is widely considered the best Rubble Film—but only after being rejected by every Western occupation force in Germany. In 1945, Wolfgang Staudte lived in the British Sector, so he pitched his idea to them first, requesting permission to make the film. They turned him down, and he went next to the Americans, and finally to the French, both of whom also denied his request. In explaining his visit to the US Information Control Officers where then-US Army Lieutenant Peter van Eyck was serving as Film Officer, Staudte reported that Van Eyck, "in einer ungeheurer gut sitzenden Uniform erzählt, dass in den nächsten 20 Jahren für uns Deutsche an Filme gar nicht zu denken sei" (Mückenberger 22).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This story quoting Peter Van Eyck, who would become an international film star, is related in several sources. In Mückenberger's article, "The Anti-Fascist Past in DEFA Films," in *DEFA: East German Cinema, 1946-1992*, translator Margaret Vallance misquotes Staudte saying that van Eyck "...gave me to understand, in broken German..." (60). In fact, Peter van Eyck was born in Steinwehr, Germany, in 1911, and emigrated in 1931, becoming an American citizen in 1943.

It was in this political climate that Volkmann selected six men—chemist and assistant director Kurt Maetzig, cinematographers Carl Haacker, Willy Schiller, lighting director Alfred Lindemann, and actors Adolf Fischer, and Hans Klering<sup>39</sup>—to form the *Filmaktiv*, a group responsible for preparing the course of German film in the Soviet Zone.<sup>40</sup> On November 22, 1945, these men attended a conference with over twenty other filmmakers, screenwriters and related artists to meet with Soviet cultural administrators at Berlin's Hotel Adlon.<sup>41</sup> Paul Wandel defined their purpose in his opening remarks, „Man wolle Filme machen, die einen neuen Geist atmen, Filme mit humanistischem, antifaschistischem, und demokratischem Inhalt, die nichts gemein haben mit der Tradition der UFA“ (Mückenberger 25).<sup>42</sup> The details of *how* films would convey these themes generated a wide range of suggestions. Director Gerhard Lamprecht pressed for future films to adopt a clear humanistic approach while Herbert Maisch sought a return to the intellectual tradition of Germany's Weimar classics. Günther Weisenborn and Friedrich Wolf urged that films engage contemporary politics. Some suggested they produce a comedy, while others pushed for films depicting women and children's themes (Mückenberger 26).

From these suggestions, the *Filmaktiv* developed and submitted a proposal to SMAD in December of 1945, which the Soviets approved the following month. Production was initially limited to newsreels and documentaries, but by May 17, 1946,<sup>43</sup> when the Soviets granted a

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<sup>39</sup> Hans Klering, first *Filmreferent*, had emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1931 and worked in 29 films in the Nazi era, then returned to Germany in October 1945 (Kersten 7); he was a Soviet citizen (Kersten 10).

<sup>40</sup> Kersten lists the initial figures as Kurt Maetzig; Adolf Fischer; directors Wolfgang Staudte, Georg C. Klaren, Peter Pewas and Boleslaw Barlog; scenarists Willy Schiller and Carl Haacker; communist dramatist Friedrich Wolf; and writer Hans Fallada (7).

<sup>41</sup> For a list of attendees and the day's schedule, see Mückenberger, 24-25.

<sup>42</sup> Mückenberger describes the UFA style as “geglättete Gesichter und Probleme, soziale Ungenauigkeit, Zeitlosigkeit und der Hang zum attraktiven Milieu, zu Klischeefiguren” (14).

<sup>43</sup> Mückenberger (36) and Kersten (8) report the date of DEFA's licensing as May 17, 1946. Sean Allen reports that it was four days earlier, (3), referring most likely to a memorandum from Paul Wandel announcing the upcoming official celebration, dated May 13, 1946, which Mückenberger cites (*Ibid.*).

production license to the Deutsche Film Aktiengesellschaft (DEFA), three feature films were already shooting.<sup>44</sup> At the licensing ceremony, Colonel Tulpanov offered,

Die Filmgesellschaft DEFA hat wichtige Aufgaben zu lösen. Die größte von ihnen ist der Kampf für den demokratischen Aufbau Deutschlands, das Ringen um die Erziehung des deutschen Volkes, insbesondere der Jugend, im Sinne der echten Demokratie und Humanität, um damit Achtung zu wecken für andere Völker und Länder. Der Film als Massenkunst muss eine scharfe und mächtige Waffe gegen die Reaktion und für die in der Tiefe wachsende Demokratie, gegen den Krieg und den Militarismus und für Frieden und Freundschaft aller Völker der ganzen Welt werden" (Kersten 8-9).

These early days were generally characterized by great optimism among filmmakers in the Eastern Zone. Not only did they anticipate the return and rediscovery of free artistic expression, but many were enthusiastic about the possibility of helping to build a better political future for Germany. In a 1996 interview, Kurt Maetzig explains:

In the first years we were very free and could make the films we wanted to make...there was almost no interference. Censorship was in the hands of the cultural division of the Soviet Military Government, and there we met officials of a very high standard of education—they were university professors and so on, and they gave us an enormous amount of freedom. This was possible because at that time the theory was officially approved that there should not be an imitation of the Soviet system in Germany, but rather a specifically German road to socialism. And I think today... that they hoped that they could help Germany to a better system than the one they had left behind them at home (Brady 83).

From among the *Filmaktiv* personalities, Klering, Lindemann, Maetzig, and Schiller—all *Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland* (SED) Party members—were chosen to lead the newly formed DEFA and provided a budget of 21,000 Reichsmarks. Because the Potsdam-Babelsberg studios were being used by Soviet Administrators, the former studios of Althoff-Atelier in Babelsberg, and Tobis Films in Johannistal, and the administration building of Nazi-era powerhouse UFA were provided for DEFA operations (Allen 4).

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<sup>44</sup> These films were Staudte's *Die Mörder sind unter uns*, Milo Harbich's *Freies Land*, and Gerhard Lamprecht's *Irgendwo in Berlin* (Allen, 3)

DEFA was placed under the direction of the Central Administration for Popular Education, a German organization created by, and answerable to, the SMAD. (Kersten 9). Subordinating the nascent film industry under German auspices did not free it from close scrutiny (however Kurt Maetzig remembers it)—films were reviewed by Soviets no less than three times. First, they were censored by the SMAD and then by Sovexport, the soviet film distributor that screened all films in the Soviet Occupation Zone, regardless of their origin (Kersten 9). Lastly, a commission consisting of members of the SED and Soviet military administrators reviewed the film for final approval (Leihm & Liehm 77).

Although this arrangement created a well-meaning balance between German autonomy and Soviet oversight, its intentions were soon subverted by the tensions of the emerging Cold War. In the summer of 1947, the Leningrad Group was purged from their positions and DEFA was made a Soviet stock company.<sup>45</sup> The board of directors shifted to a Soviet majority—three Soviets (Klering, Trauberg and Wolkenstein) and two Germans (Lindemann and Maetzig) with Hans Klering as Chairman. The new Soviet film censor, Major Rosanov, declared his intentions to “clear out the last remnants of the Leningrad Group” and a series of removing and replacing their German counterparts followed (Kersten 10). DEFA was ultimately returned to “reliable” German hands in a process that has been described as, “alles wird SED-ifiziert.” By the spring of 1949, only Kurt Maetzig remained as an original director of DEFA, and he only for having given up on making socially critical films (Kersten 12).

While the Western story of German film industry reconstruction is generally one of distrusting military administrators who reluctantly permitted free enterprise because of occupation force budget cuts, political pressure to complete denazification and reeducation, and because of the threat of losing an inordinate number of talented artists and technicians to the

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<sup>45</sup> DEFA becomes a Soviet corporation on November 4, 1947 (Kersten 10).

Soviets' film endeavors, in many ways early film reconstruction in the Eastern zone portrays the opposite. The Soviets were the first to initiate filmmaking and, by all appearances, SMAD officers had the best intentions of fostering German democracy (as a specifically German form of Socialism) through film. Moreover, Soviet administrators trusted German citizens enough that they placed some of the responsibility of reeducation on them. In the West, only the British took a similar approach, though it wouldn't develop until mid-1947. It was only because of the Stalinist purge of the Leningrad Group and the subsequent restriction of political development that perfectly free expression in the film industry was stunted. Previously, I cited the first part of Kurt Maetzig's description of DEFA's (and Eastern Germany's<sup>46</sup>) early years. As much as that quote portrayed the enthusiastic expectations many Germans in the East had for their future, the quote's second half shows how quickly and absolutely those expectations dissolved.

But this wonderful first period lasted only three or four years, then everything changed with the creation of the GDR and censorship passed into the hands of the new state authorities. I would say that at around the same time that the row broke out between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia everything changed. A Stalinist cultural policy was applied to us as well, and as a result many things changed, and not for the better (Brady 83).

Anti-fascist films gave way to anti-Western films, as the new SED leadership sought to portray capitalism as responsible for fascism. A spate of such films followed, one of which was the 1950 DEFA film, *Rat der Götter*, which focuses on a number of problematic issues related to industrial monopolies. While the film is primarily about IG-Farben's support for the Nazi regime, it also underscores the wartime relationship between big businesses in the United States and Germany. This fact is certainly cause for concern on both sides of the Atlantic, but Maetzig's portrayal of the postwar US as a latent, fascist power is unmasked propaganda (Kannapin 129-130). As the prospect of a single German nation-state grew increasingly

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<sup>46</sup> By *Eastern Germany* I mean the zones and people administered by the Soviet Union that later became East Germany.

unlikely, DEFA filmmakers replaced their efforts to address the past by confronting new, more pressing, perceived dangers that were emerging in the West.

As the two superpowers rooted their ideologies with their halves of Germany in an increasingly bipolar alignment, the administrators and the administrated of both sides chose to ignore the past for the sake of *Realpolitik* expediency. Britain and France drew closer to the United States, at once desperately needing Marshall Plan support and intimidated by apparent Soviet encroachment. Conversely, Eastern Germany's SED was eager to establish its own political course and was perhaps intimidated by the greed and indomitability of free-market capitalism. Consequently, any suggestions for *Trauerarbeit* were subordinated to feelings that one side needed to ideologically define oneself against the other. The brewing Cold War seemed to justify many Germans' desire to ignore Karl Jaspers call for self-reflection—certainly no one could trifile with the past with the danger of another, more destructive war looming. The questions of the past and the answers contained in any form of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* would have to wait.

### Part III. Film Analysis

In *Part I*, I examined three texts that addressed *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in order to portray the practically insurmountable difficulties many Germans faced in their efforts to come to terms with the Nazi past. *Part II* synopsized the German film industry's reconstitution in a climate of exceptional political tension and uncertainty, as the emerging superpowers maneuvered to bolster their respective halves of Germany—and by extension, their halves of the film industry and other mass media—against perceived threats from their ideological opponents, ultimately at the expense of initial intentions for a thorough German reeducation. This reeducation was intended as much to exorcise fascism and the tragedies of the past as to promote democracy, whether as liberal democracy or communist socialism. As a result of the psychological challenges discussed in *Part I* and the external, socio-political pressures presented in *Part II*, filmmakers were forced to operate along an exceptionally narrow course.<sup>47</sup> In this section, I will look at two films made under these difficult conditions: Helmut Käutner's *In jenen Tagen* (1947) and Kurt Maetzig's *Ehe im Schatten* (1947). It is my intention that any criticism of their portrayals of the past will not be seen as a failure by those who made them, but rather will serve to underscore the challenges Rubble Film makers faced.

#### Käutner's *In jenen Tagen*

Helmut Käutner's *In jenen Tagen* premiered June 13, 1947 in Hamburg (Pleyer 193); a British-licensed film, it was the Western Zone's first feature film.<sup>48</sup> Käutner had been a successful, yet apolitical director under National Socialism by making films that limited

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<sup>47</sup> Robert Shandley notes that very few incidents of censorship are to be found in the archives of the occupying forces or contemporary filmmakers. While that may be, it provides only hindsight and does not alter contemporary filmmakers' perceptions of close scrutiny and limited artistic freedom.

<sup>48</sup> *Sag' die Wahrheit* premiered earlier, December 20, 1946, but is a so-called *Überläuferfilm*, as shooting began in 1944.

themselves to the private sphere (Bessen 130).<sup>49</sup> Working within these confines afforded him good denazification credentials from military administrators and name-recognition from Germany's movie fans. Many people believed that this background afforded Käutner greater artistic license, leading them to anticipate that his first postwar film would signal a new aesthetic direction of German cinema, much as Neo-Realism had emerged in post-fascist Italy. While Käutner's own *Überläufersfilm*, *Unter den Brücken* (1944/ 1950),<sup>50</sup> as well as *In jenen Tagen* have been characterized as neo-realist,<sup>51</sup> Ursula Bessen describes the latter film as poetic-realist (131), but, as I will explain later, I suggest it is more appropriately described as sentimental-realist.

However one may choose to characterize it, *In jenen Tagen* was not the dramatic aesthetic shift that many had hoped for, as Käutner's film relied on many UFA conventions.<sup>52</sup> I would suggest, though, that it might actually have been preferable to retain the established cinematic style. First, given the degree of mistrust Western military administrators held toward film, directors would have been ill-advised to attempt a radically different aesthetic. Because the UFA-style was not significantly different from contemporary, Hollywood techniques, OMGUS censors, might have been less likely to reject films that were aesthetically familiar to those of their own experience. Second, by maintaining an established convention, filmmakers likely hoped that their audience would focus on the film's message, rather than become distracted by

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<sup>49</sup> For more on Käutner's life and work, see Jacobsen and Prinzler's *Käutner* (Berlin: Edition Filme, Wissenschaftsverlag, 1992).

<sup>50</sup> Prinzler's *Chronik des deutschen Films* describes *Unter den Brücken* as "a neo realist variation of Vigos' *L'atalante*, Käutner's favorite film" (166).

<sup>51</sup> Neo-realism was a term first applied to French film in the 1930s, but is most frequently associated with postwar Italian cinema (Liehm, 24). Peter Bondanella writes, "Neo-realism reflects emphasis on social realism, as can be seen from one very typical list of its general characteristics: realistic treatment, popular setting, social content, historical actuality, and political commitment (31).

<sup>52</sup> Recall that the "UFA –style" was described in *Part II* as having "geglättete Gesichter und Probleme, soziale Ungenauigkeit, Zeitlosigkeit und der Hang zum attraktiven Milieu, zu Klischeefiguren" (Mückenberger, >>Sie sehen selbst, Sie hören selbst...<<, 14).

unusual cinematic conventions. As a result, Käutner's film uses the usual cinematic methods to tell a very unusual story—the story of ordinary Germans under National Socialism as seen through the eyes of an automobile.

Following the opening credits, *In jenen Tagen* begins with a typical Rubble Film establishing shot, panning across a bombed out, but unidentifiable cityscape, and down to a trio of *Hamsterfahrer*—an older couple and a one-legged man—past innumerable automobile and truck hulks, before coming to rest at the remains of a single Opel Kadett. It is being stripped by two men, whose names we soon learn are Willi and Karl, the latter wearing what was once a *Wehrmacht* uniform. Willi asks for a cigarette, and, upon hearing that Karl has none, laments their situation in words that must have resonated strongly with a contemporary audience, “Die alte Platte, was? Nichts zu rauchen, nichts zu trinken, nichts zu essen, keine Kohlen, kein richtiger Beruf, keine Wohnung, kein Geld, keine Nachricht von Susanne, keine Zukunft, keine Illusionen, keine... keine... keine...!”<sup>53</sup> Karl adds, “Es gibt keine *Menschen* mehr...Genauso wie es keine gegeben hat in all den verfluchten Jahren,” at which Willi balks, asking what a *Mensch* is, anyway.

With this question, Käutner has established the film's central theme: it will endeavor to show us *Menschen* from the past in order to prove that there are still *Menschen* today.<sup>54</sup> I would agree with Shandley's appraisal that, “A *Mensch* turns out to be someone who, however privately, expressed opposition to some aspect of Nazism. But, *Menschlichkeit*—as humanity in all the positive and negative possibilities it connotes—turns out to be the destination of ‘inner emigration,’ that is, those who stayed in Germany but opposed the regime privately” (58).

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<sup>53</sup> Except in a few cases where my notes add lines he has omitted, all citations from the films come from Pleyer.

<sup>54</sup> I have left *Mensch* untranslated as it defies direct translation. Shandley suggests *humanity* as the closest term (52), and I cannot improve upon it except to suggest that it encompasses a rich mosaic of moral and ethical sentiments that define our character. Käutner doesn't show stories about compassionate or virtuous people; he shows stories about people who *try* to be compassionate and virtuous. The emphasis is on their effort.

Meanwhile, a voice identifying itself as the car explains that, even though the two men cannot hear him, he wishes to answer their question. It is perhaps no coincidence that the person behind the voice was Helmut Käutner. Like Käutner, whom many people felt had an appropriately blameless past that he could direct a film addressing *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, an inanimate object provided a degree of detachment that prevented the moralizing finger-pointing, or alternately, the back-patting that a live character would invariably have introduced. The car asks, “Lassen Sie mich sachlich, vorurteilsfrei oder herzlos berichten wie es einem toten Gegenstände zukommt.”

The car tells us that its life, such as it is, is over; but that when it was born it thought it would last a thousand years. At the exact moment it says “mein Leben würde 1000 Jahre währen...” images of factories and production lines, ostensibly used to portray its birthplace, blend into a low-angle shot of a military formation marching away down a road. With these words the connection between the car and the Third Reich is introduced, and then immediately established with the explanation that its life lasted only twelve years. This segment proves to be the most obvious instance of the film’s pattern of understatement and intimation, as Käutner allows viewers to make their own connections and, ultimately, to draw their own conclusions. But, while there is certainly a clever irony in reducing an empire to the lifespan of a now-defunct machine, the metaphor is misleading because it exists only to anchor the start and end of the narrative—the allusion that the car might somehow embody the Third Reich is never again suggested. In fact, the opposite is true—none of its seven owners were significant personalities or even party members, and only one, a soldier, was directly involved in public service. By

recounting the personal histories of seven Everymen/-women as examples of *Menschen*, the car makes a case for the compassion of ordinary people throughout Germany.<sup>55</sup>

The episodes occur during the most significant events and conditions of the Nazi-era—Hitler's installation as Chancellor, the Nuremberg laws, *Kristallnacht*, the resistance movement, Germany's Eastern Front, the July 20, 1944 assassination attempt, and displaced persons as the war ended—yet these public events provide only background for the private lives showcased in the episodes. This is clear from the first episode, which portrays Germany's exiles.

A woman, Sybille, must choose between two men, one of whom, Steffen, has just told her that he is leaving that evening for Tampico, Mexico, and expects to be gone for “a thousand years and a day.” He asks her to go with him, but insists he hasn’t the time to explain why he must go. Not understanding his urgency, she turns him down. That evening in Berlin, Sybille is en route to the opera with her other suitor, Peter Kaiser, when their car becomes surrounded by a mob cheering a torch procession. Peter and Sybille explain most of the action while the camera maintains a close-up of the couple through the car’s windshield. Peter is content to sit there, enjoying Sybille’s company and scratches the date in the car’s windshield as a reminder “von diesem glücklichsten Tag.” After he scratches the date—30.1.33—a countershot looks past the glass, shifting focus to the crowd of people just in front of them, some of whom are raising their hands slowly in salute as a still-unfocussed procession of torches marches by. Seeing their gestures, it finally occurs to Peter, “Natürlich, sie bringen dem neuen Reichskanzler einen Fackelzug, der ist ja heute Reichskanzler geworden, der Dingsda!” Unphased by their realization, Sybille relates almost casually that Steffen is traveling to Mexico, the circumstances for which Peter understands immediately:

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<sup>55</sup> The German film museum’s *Zwischen Gestern und Morgen* panned the film, complaining that Käutner wrote a horrible story (341). I disagree; Käutner’s idea was an inspired approach given its blame-weary audience. That said, this car brought worse luck than Stephen King’s Christine.

PETER: Natürlich, dann bleibt er drüben! Er mußte weg, das ist doch überhaupt klar.

SYBILLE: ...Was meinst du denn?

PETER: ... Er wär' doch einer der ersten gewesen, den sie sich geschnappt hätten!...

SYBILLE: Wer?

PETER (pointing through the windshield): Die da! Die wissen doch genau, was sie wollen.

SYBILLE: Jetzt versteh ich erst, darum diese Eile, dass er so anders war und doch wieder nicht und diese Frage!

Sybille quickly decides that she must be with Steffen, and drives to the port that night to meet him. Her change of heart contrasts sharply with the naivety she has shown until this exchange. She knows nothing of the developing political situation, and doesn't appear interested in the details of it at all, but insofar as it explains the details of her personal relationship, it motivates her to change her decision. Peter serves as an effective foil. He seems to have understood the day's significance much better, but even the loss of a rival suitor does not fully account for his relative insouciance.

To end the episode, the car returns the narrative to the public sphere, explaining metaphorically that few realized what the date meant. While the film's ostensible purpose is described by a review in the *Spiegel*—“Er will nichts weiter als aus einer unmenschlichen Zeit die Gesichter einer Handvoll Menschen hervorheben” (Bessen 145)—the narrative allows the viewer to extend Sybille's innocence throughout Germany: those who did realize that day's political consequences would have made choices in support of the exiles, much like Sybille did. Additionally, I would note that there is no mention of why Steffen must flee. By leaving the viewer to imagine the reason, Käutner saves narrative time and intimates that the reason for Steffen's exile is not (and never was) important. While this should have emphasized the tragedy, instead it marginalizes it. For the roughly two minutes Steffen is on camera, he does not appear to be persecuted, but just in a hurry. By skipping through the details of his exile, Käutner begins

a pattern that reoccurs in most of the film's episodes, where those most directly and severely affected by Fascism are supporting characters whose tragedies interrupt the episode's protagonist. Bessen describes Käutner's style as *poetische Realismus*, (131)<sup>56</sup> but I believe a more appropriate phrase is "sentimental realism." The past's most tragic stories are more often only sideshows that serve to place an episode's protagonist in a moral dilemma. Because the portrayal of these dilemmas and the honorable choices that follow them frequently come at the expense of portraying the real source of conflict, Käutner's narrative verges on sentimental kitsch. Steffen believes so fervently—and Peter agrees—that his life is in imminent danger by the rise of the Nazis that he leaves the continent immediately, presumably giving up everything but what he could carry. The story, however, focuses not on him, but on the love triangle in which he is the weakest member, changing the story from a politically-derived tragedy to romantic melodrama.

Episode Two recounts a story of artistic persecution. A composer, Wolfgang Grunelius, is having an affair with his friend's wife, Elisabeth. When the daughter, Angela, learns of her mother's infidelity by finding her mother's hair comb in Grunelius' car, she determines to tell her father, Wolfgang Buschenhagen, in the presence of the illicit lovers. At the moment Angela is about to reveal the affair, Grunelius announces that he has been outlawed by the Düsseldorfer Laws. His upcoming concert has been cancelled and his music declared degenerate: "Meine Noten werden verbrannt, entartet nennt man das, was ich mache! Ich bin entartet!" Visibly distressed, Angela quickly decides that she cannot expose their deception in light of this tragedy, and hides the comb first in her hand, and then in the car's glove box. Again, a public sphere event has changed the course of private sphere lives. When the lovers notice Angela crying, Elisabeth asks her what the matter is.

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<sup>56</sup> Bessen offers no definition of poetic realism or justification of why she characterizes this film as such.

ELISABETH: Aber Kind, was ist denn?  
ANGELA: Ihr wißt ja nicht...  
ELISABETH: Doch, Spatz, wir wissen schon!  
ANGELA: Nein!  
GRUNELIUS: Eins kommt zum anderen.

Transitioning to the next episode, the car repeats Grunelius' words, adding, "So kam eins zum anderen in jenen Tagen, auch Dinge, die nicht zusammengehörten..." The episode begins with Wilhelm and Sally, a married couple perhaps in their fifties, packing the now familiar car with luggage and boxes, securing the load with rope tied across the car's top. They are in front of their business, a framing shop, and are bickering in what seems like an established routine, even if the topic is a new one:

SALLY: Wann willst du sie denn dranmachen, die weißen Buchstaben an die Scheibe?  
WILHELM: ...Wie komm' ich denn dazu, meine weißen Buchstaben genügen mir...  
SALLY: Steck' den Kopf nicht in den Sand, Wilhelm! Die auf der Fachgruppe wissen genau, dass das Geschäft auf mich überschrieben ist.  
WILHELM: Also, dann wissen sie ja auch, dass alles nur eine Formalität war.

Finished packing, they drive to their weekend house somewhere outside of the city. When Wilhelm complains at how much Sally has brought with them, she tells him, "Wir dürfen nicht mehr Auto fahren." Wilhelm doesn't understand, taking *we* to mean she and him, but she explains, "*Du* schon, Wilhelm, aber versteh' mich doch einmal! *Wir* nicht! *Wir!* Und mir gehört schließlich das Auto." Overcome by the ever-increasing restrictions on their lives, Sally suggests they divorce, citing their bickering as an additional reason. Wilhelm refuses—they've been married almost 32 years—and they return that evening to the frame shop.

They arrive in the middle of a looting scene, as an SA man directs a mob of thugs to smash out store windows with white lettering. The action takes place almost entirely off screen, limiting the viewer's experience to the sounds of breaking glass and an occasional scream as the couple watches in silent, awed horror. Wilhelm picks up a large stone from the sidewalk and,

after several moments of contemplation, he smashes his own window. The camera shoots Wilhelm head on through the glass from a high angle as if the viewer were the shop. When the glass shatters, our view of the couple is partly obscured by swinging shards with the store's white letters on them, as if the looting has broken something inside of us for having been passive spectators. Anyone looking for statements of blame or societal guilt need look no further than this single shot—it is the closest Käutner comes to any critical expression of collective responsibility.

The broken glass also foreshadows the following scene, which shows the couple's weekend house the next morning. A police officer stands in front of it, surrounded by a small group of neighbors, as he notes information on a small pad. The couple has killed themselves inside the home with gas.

POLICEMAN: Wie hießen diese Leute?

MAN: Bienert

POLICEMAN: Vorname?

MAN: Wilhelm.

POLICEMAN: Vorname der Frau und Mädchenname?

MAN: Das weiß ich net auch der Vorstand, immer nur Frau ist Bienert.

A WOMAN (off camera, calling out): Sally hieß sie.

POLICEMAN (nodding): Ach so!

Although contemporary viewers might very well have remembered the law requiring Jews to use white letters for their businesses and perhaps even the law forbidding ownership of automobiles and other property, the couple never explicitly *says* that Sally is Jewish. Thus, like the policeman's nod of understanding at hearing Sally's name, the reason of the couple's persecution as well as their death remains unstated. Recalling Steffen's exile and Grunelius' proscription in the first two episodes, by this point in the film a theme of omission has been firmly established. Both of these men's fates could be explained by political persecution equally as well as by any targeted ethnicity. Film scholars have consistently noted how *In jenen Tagen*

portrays the Nazi as an abstract, unseen and yet unstoppable force in citing its aesthetic similarities to the UFA style,<sup>57</sup> and certainly this manner of portrayal allows Käutner to avoid the strong emotions that a more detailed, or even personified, portrayal of the Nazis would likely have triggered. But, in this episode, omitting an explicit explanation robs Sally's character of her very identity. Where Käutner could have introduced a more sobering, though still not accusatory, portrayal of the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany, he instead glosses over the details, expecting that a series of inferences will suffice. Because the actions of his protagonists remain confined to the private sphere, they do not.

The fourth episode focuses on the resistance movement. If Käutner failed to vilify Germany's worst figures, at least he portrays the best figures with realism. A woman, Dorothea, cannot find her husband, Jochen, and enlists the help of her sister, Ruth, in finding him. Dorothea has no idea what could have happened and the authorities claim only too politely that they don't either. After trying every local bureaucratic office, Ruth tells Dorothea the truth.

RUTH: Du, Dorothea, die lügen! Jochen stand in Verbindung mit Leuten in Stockholm und in der Schweiz. Er wollte nach Zürich im Herbst, das ist wahrscheinlich rausgekommen.

DOROTHEA (astonished): Was sagst du da? Woher willst du denn das wissen?

RUTH: Ich wollte mit.

DOROTHEA: Du, wieso?

RUTH: Wir sind schon eine ganze Zeit zusammen. Jochen liebt mich, wir lieben uns! Wir arbeiten zusammen für die Freiheit!

Dorothea takes Ruth home, telling her to get out "before I punch you in the face," and drives endlessly, trying to sort out the realization that perhaps she did not know her husband at all. When she finally stops, a resistance member tells her that Jochen has been shot, but that the way remains open for a second person to escape to freedom. Jochen had left instructions for a woman to follow him, and the resistance member assumes it is Dorothea. She tells the man she will him follow shortly, and calls Ruth from a phone booth, telling her that Jochen has escaped to safety

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<sup>57</sup> See, among others, Shandley and Bessen.

and that she—Ruth—should follow him. As Dorothea speaks, raindrops fall steadily on the booth's glass, evoking her tears in a cinematic effect that has since become cliché. Standing across the street with a group of other army recruits, Peter Kaiser (from Episode One) spots his old Opel and approaches Dorothea cheerfully to chat with her about it, but she is lost in thought and cannot hear him, overwhelmed by the day's events. She sobs absently and drives away as the scene cuts to a tight shot of Dorothea's apartment from which two Gestapo men lead her away.

To save her sister, Dorothea sacrifices herself, but to what end? Is it because she loves Ruth, even if Ruth has stolen her husband? Is it because she loves Jochen, and acts according to what she believes he might have wanted? Or is it because she loves them both and respects their struggle against the Nazi regime? If it is for the resistance—which Dorothea has not known and the viewer has not seen—there is no clear indication. Perhaps, grimly, she wants to be arrested, deciding that her husband and sister's deceptions are too much to bear. There is no indication that her actions leave the realm of her grief from the private sphere love triangle to protest the injustices she, Jochen and Ruth are suffering due to political realities in the public sphere.

Käutner's cinematography discourages the viewer from inferring such a public sphere connection, as he frequently maneuvers the camera into odd positions to limit any shots of the regime and its machinery. A building is identified only by the "SS" on the license plate of the parked car in front of it. When the two Gestapo men arrest Dorothea, their dark hats and heavy, nondescript trench coats hide all detail of the men beneath them. They appear just long enough in front of the camera for Dorothea to be recognized, and then they are gone. Recalling from *Part II* that few overt indicators of National Socialism, whether flags, armbands or party

symbols, were present in Nazi era film, the aesthetic similarity with *In jenen Tagen* is striking.<sup>58</sup>

Where the previous era did not want to make its case for fascism too strongly, this postwar film balks at showing fascism too negatively. Consequently, there is no indication for what motivates Dorothea to sacrifice herself, as Käutner has again worked so diligently to avoid any details that might raise the film's emotional stakes. The result is a sacrifice with no meaning, an act of supreme selflessness with no clear purpose. The viewer feels the sentimentality of her actions, but beneath their surface lies no understanding of what motivated them, and thus no real, moral message is communicated to the viewer.

The viewer's sense of sentimentality is further heightened by Peter Kaiser's appearance as he grins broadly, staring at the car, half lost in the memory of his earlier days. Not noticing that she is lost in her thoughts, Peter asks Dorothea if she has noticed the date scratched in the windshield, "Haben Sie die Zahl an der Windschutzscheibe schon entdeckt? Die stammt von mir. 30. Januar 33—das waren noch Zeiten. Das war nämlich der glücklichste Tag meines Lebens." At this, Peter's smile quickly fades as he realizes how oddly ironic his comment must sound while Dorothea, still consumed in thought, drives away.

Peter Kaiser's appearance further serves to prepare the viewer for the next episode, which takes place in the winter, somewhere near Germany's Eastern Front. Peter is no more a soldier than the Opel was designed for military transport, but it too has been pressed into service, as evidenced by its new, camouflage pattern. By extension, one can imagine a nation of Peter Kaisers whose lives have been similarly transformed—these men are not career soldiers, but have found themselves in the uniform of their country, acting as best they are able in a miserable situation.

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<sup>58</sup> Shandley expands this argument to Rubble Films in general, writing, "...the postwar films break with the Nazi tradition by portraying current times, but they hold true to the rule of keeping Nazis hidden" (59). This is too broad a statement to apply to all Rubble Films, but certainly holds true here.

Episode Five begins at a train station in what looks to be an otherwise barren, desolate land. A soldier is assigned to escort his newly-arrived lieutenant from a train station to their unit. He chats for a minute with a sentry, and they both agree that the soldier should not drive back to the front that evening—the moon will be out. But, when the lieutenant arrives, he—the lieutenant—insists that they head out at once: “Haben Sie Angst vorm Mond, Mann?” As the two men drive through the night over snow-covered, wilderness roads, they discuss their experience thus far in the army. The lieutenant, eager to make a good impression on the older soldier, claims he is no new recruit, but the soldier is too weary to be impressed.

DER FAHRER: Neu! --Sie hier im Osten!

DER LEUTNANT: Aber ich hab' doch Polen mitgemacht!

DER FAHRER: Polen ist nicht Rußland, Herr Leutnant. Polen, das war'n Feldzug, hier ist es Krieg, und nicht nur gegen Soldaten, hier ...macht alles mit, Frauen, die Luft, die Erde, der Wald! Hier können Sie eine verpaßt kriegen, und hören keinen Piep und merken erst lange danach, dass Sie tot sind.

Eventually the moon breaks through the clouds, revealing the car plainly against the white snow. The soldier suggests they turn back to the safety of an engineer unit they recently passed, but the lieutenant will not here of it—they are almost there. Soon afterward, partisans fire at them with machine guns. The episode ends, fading out of a headshot of the soldier at the wheel, his dead eyes staring blankly, while the lieutenant struggles to drive the car from behind him, hoping to press on the last few kilometers. The car narrates as the camera transitions to a shot of it parked below an enrubbled cityscape, “Ich kam zurück, das war damals die allgemeine Richtung. Ob der Leutnant auch zurückgekommen ist, ich weiß es nicht. ... Vielleicht ist er draußen geblieben. Ich blieb in Berlin, ich tauchte unter, wie man das damals nannte. Es war eine unruhige Zeit...”

Episode Five is the only one of the seven that occurs beyond Germany's borders. This is indicated by the Cyrillic lettering shown in the corner of the screen at the train station scene, but

not by showing any of the partisans they mention.<sup>59</sup> Intent on continuing an exclusive portrayal of Germany's wartime experience—particularly in showing the war's devastation in the last two episodes—Käutner purposely omits any significant reference to the countries Germany invaded. The establishing shot is obstructed by the backs of a handful of local civilians walking past the camera, and most of the train station scene's shots are medium-close, so that rather than seeing the details of any surroundings, the background is mainly unfocussed, open sky. This might have been done to increase the viewer's sense of the Eastern Front's vastness, or perhaps, more practically, to conceal anomalies with the shooting location, but it results in preventing a sense of the absolute destruction that war brought to the region. When the two men are shown driving, night has already fallen, hiding any view of the landscape except the closest trees. On a far greater scale than in the west, buildings were razed, crops burned, and countless Eastern Europeans were displaced, but the episode shows none of this, even though German displacement is the focus of Episode Seven.

As with the previous stories, the sixth episode occurs against the backdrop of a significant historical event. Here, it is the assassination attempt against Hitler on July 20, 1944, providing the last characterization of Germany's military as *Menschen*, which began with Peter Kaiser in Episode Four and was the focus of the fifth episode. A working class woman, Erna, endeavors to rescue her former employer, the elderly Baroness von Thorn, from the daily bombings of Berlin and take her to a manor in the country. To do so, she illegally drives the Opel—it has no registration documents—amidst burning buildings, rubble-filled streets and an air raid siren, but before they leave the city, the car breaks down for lack of coolant. Erna leaves the baroness in search of water, and a policeman soon arrives at the car. As he is speaking with the baroness and reviewing her papers, Erna returns.

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<sup>59</sup> A few local civilians do walk passed the camera as the episode begins, but only their backs are shown.

ERNA: Was gibt's denn, Herr Wachtmeister, ist was nicht in Ordnung mit uns zwei Hübschen?

POLIZIST: Verschiedenes! Sind Sie bei Frau von Thorn in Stellung?

ERNA: Was ist denn los?

POLIZIST: Das werden Sie ja sehen, steigen Sie mal ein!

Erna expects that he is arresting them for driving an unregistered car, and, as she pours water into the radiator, she quietly asks the policeman to spare the baroness, "Lassen Sie doch die alte Frau laufen, die weiß doch von nichts." But he refuses, explaining that, according to his instructions, Baroness von Thorn is wanted by the police. Erna remains convinced the problem is a matter of a paperwork formality, but, as the two climb into the car, the baroness explains, "Es ist leider keine Formalität, liebes Kind, aber das können Sie nicht ahnen. Mein Sohn ist am 20. Juli mitschuldig geworden, und ich bin seine Mutter!" She asks the policeman to allow Erna to go free, "Das Mädchen hat mit der Sache nichts zu tun. Sie hat von nichts gewußt und wollte mich vor den Bomben in Sicherheit bringen." Again, the policeman refuses, and the episode ends as they grasp one another's hands in mutual support.

If being a *Mensch* is simply someone who has expressed opposition, no matter how privately or inwardly, to the regime,<sup>60</sup> then certainly these two women qualify. Erna breaks a law that would likely be in effect under any government, while the baroness has committed a crime only by association. This story's true *Mensch*, however, is the baroness' son, Colonel von Thorn. Not only does he represent the military in general, whose *Menschlichkeit* has already been established through Peter Kaiser and the men on the Eastern Front, but he represents specifically Germany's military class. As with most of the previous episodes, the message is impeded because Käutner has subordinated the would-be protagonist for use as a means to provide dramatic tension. Colonel Thorn's actions are discussed at the episode's beginning and end, bookending the general story, but he is never heard or seen.

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<sup>60</sup> See page 1 of this section.

The episode should serve to distinguish Germany's much-esteemed military elite from Nazi party members, supporting a view that exonerated the former from the blame of losing the war. Because many Germans were experiencing profound disillusionment at the collapse of their government and society, other established institutions became a reassuring source of esteem for some. The Mitscherlichs explain, "...Die bedingungslose Kapitulation nach so viel Hochmut mußte ein intensives Schamgefühl auslösen. Das Ich der Verlassenen fühlte sich betrogen; jedermann versuchte, dieses gescheiterte und gefährliche Ideal wieder "auszuspucken", zu externalisieren. Jetzt hieß es: Die Nazis waren an allem schuld" (77). Citing widespread resistance to rearmament, particularly as Germany's geopolitically central position in the Cold War emerged, Becker and Schöll claim that Germany's military tradition in the first postwar decade was unpopular (79). I would agree with their assessment only insofar as they mean any reference to a militarized society or martial government, but, given the number of postwar films that portrayed military resistance under the Nazi regime, the perception of Germany's military class as a positive institution seems to have remained largely intact. Ultimately, though, much of this message remains obscured by what emerges as a show of inter-class solidarity between Erna and the baroness. Their act of clasping hands as the policeman escorts them to jail and an uncertain fate is deemed more worthy of cinematic portrayal than the Colonel's involvement in trying to stop a madman, cementing Käutner's message that no action beyond the private sphere is necessary to be a *Mensch*.

As the sixth episode allowed a glimpse of hope for postwar Germany, the seventh makes hope its theme. A soldier, Josef, who has been separated from his unit, befriends a single, widowed mother, Maria, and her child in a straw-filled barn. Käutner is keen to realize that, after six storylines and separate sets of figures with no dramatic connection to link one another,

the audience is growing impatient by this point. Accordingly, this final episode is the shortest and has the thinnest plot structure: Maria asks Josef for a ride in the car, which he is busily repairing through much of the episode, even though her destination is far out of his way. Eventually, he agrees. The two talk and share the few morsels of food they have, finally lying down together platonically for the evening. Although they lie side by side and each has begun to form an interest in the other, Josef is honorable and Maria is respectable. Their (in)actions make clear what their nativity-scene allusion only suggested—they are Käutner's model family for postwar, German society.

To be sure, Käutner has not portrayed married couples in a positive light thus far in the film: the central relationships in three of the seven episodes are love triangles, two of which feature marital infidelity. The one married couple where neither partner is cheating is the couple that commits suicide together. But *that* was during “those days.” Käutner’s last episode is focused on the future and no symbol, not even the Holy Family, is too lofty to express his hope for it. Most likely, Käutner chose to bolster the family in response to surging postwar divorce rates in both the western and eastern zones (which were about three times what they had been in the late thirties) and the proliferation of so-called *wilde Ehen* (Schneider 209). Given this postwar “marriage crisis,” Käutner’s portrayal of the smiling, almost giddy, couple evokes a public service announcement endorsing traditional marriages. It also creates momentum for the hopeful narration that ends the episode:

Ja, meine Herren, ich habe nicht viel von jenen Tagen gesehen, keine großen Ereignisse, keine Helden, nur ein paar Schicksale. Und auch davon nur Ausschnitte. Aber ich habe ein paar Menschen gesehen. Und nach denen fragten Sie doch, Herr Willi, nicht? Die Zeit war stärker als sie, aber ihre Menschlichkeit war stärker als die Zeit. Es hat sie gegeben, diese Menschen, und es wird sie immer geben, zu allen Zeiten! Denken Sie daran, wenn Sie an Ihre Arbeit gehen, und bitte, entschuldigen Sie noch einmal, dass ich, ein toter Gegenstand, sich in Ihre Unterhaltung gemischt hat.

Käutner's film was a commercial success, but perhaps at the expense of serving as a successful *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* film. Not only did he have to make a film that military administrators would allow, but he also had to make something that German audiences would pay to see. That Käutner wrote a screenplay about the past at all indicates a desire to come to terms with it, but a closer look at the film's thematic message shows his attention was not focused on a laborious working *through* of the past, but on working *out* the past into a palatable memory so that the business of rebuilding a compassionate society might begin with a clear conscience. This emphasis is most evident at the film's conclusion, which takes place at the scrap yard where the film began, showing Karl and Willi further dissembling the Opel. They return to the question of what a *Mensch* is, and Karl shrugs that it defies explanation:

KARL: Vielleicht kann man es nur fühlen. Sagen kann man es überhaupt nicht!

WILLI: Hauptsache ist wohl, man versucht, einer zu sein!

KARL: Man hat verdammt viel Gelegenheit heutzutage, was!

But indeed Käutner has answered this question through his characters' consistent pattern of action: a *Mensch* is "someone who, however privately, expressed opposition to some aspect of Nazism" (Shandley 58). When applying Jaspers' four categories of responsibility—criminal, political, moral, and metaphysical—the characters' actions, which Käutner has showcased as great examples of humanity, become much more problematic. Recalling that Jaspers rejected the notion of collective responsibility, believing that individuals alone should be encouraged to reflect on the past and atone according to their consciences as appropriate, the purpose of analyzing the characters' actions is to draw conclusions about how well they encourage their audience to reflect and what insight they offer as to the screenwriters' or director's apparent reflection. Certainly none of the characters bear any criminal responsibility, and presumably Käutner could leave those Germans to the military tribunals. Additionally, Käutner is likely to

have omitted references to metaphysical responsibility due to its theoretical nature and the difficulty of portraying such an abstract concept in film. Turning then to the portrayals of political and moral responsibility, Käutner's characters are not easily absolved.

On the question of political responsibility, Jaspers claims all citizens are responsible for the actions of their government. In *In jenen Tagen*, however, that government is all but unseen: two episodes briefly show a policeman, one includes a glimpse of what might be police investigators, and there is the paper forbidding Sally Bienert from driving her car, but otherwise there is nothing, only a sense of compulsion transmitted by the film's characters. Repeatedly, the film explains not that there was an oppressive regime, but that the times themselves were bad. The effect of this arrangement is profound, roughly shaping Käutner's message into: A *Mensch* need not be politically engaged. Certainly, there can be no political responsibility where there are no politics, because by not portraying an oppressive regime there is no regime to act against. Consequently, Käutner's *Menschen* have no recourse in the public sphere for the conflicts they face. While this limited portrayal exculpates their failure to act against oppression, it is not accurate and creates the very opposite, glossed-over memory of the past that Jaspers encouraged Germans to work through.

Käutner's film worked to ensure that audiences saw themselves in the role of the film's protagonists, remembering the sacrifices they—the viewing audience—made and the hard times they—again, the audience—endured, but forgetful of the Nazi Germany's real-life Jochens and Colonel von Thorns. Käutner could not afford these brave character types an on-screen portrayal lest they compromise the viewer's sense that they themselves are the heroes. Additionally—and most disturbingly—by allowing that “bad times” were themselves the source of trouble, the

sacrifices and loss for which the film works so hard to gain audience sympathy are shown not as tragedies but merely as misfortune, as if they were indeed unpreventable.

Looking to moral responsibility, the film fares no better, as civil courage is reduced to a matter of accepting one's fate. Rather than resist the Nazis and defend friends like Steffen, Sybille flees Germany with him. Similarly, the Bienerts kill themselves and Dorothea allows herself to be arrested. Thus, according to Käutner, the ultimate expression of *Menschlichkeit* appears to be some form of self-annihilation, either as exile or suicide. While each *Mensch* made brave decisions within the private sphere, none of them are able to project resistance into the public sphere, supporting the conclusion that, as much as the phenomenon of "those days," fascism itself was unavoidable.

Some might argue that, because western occupying forces had amply expressed the case for German guilt there was no further need to show the worst of Germany's past. But Käutner's omission of all but the slightest details of oppression is not even a balanced portrayal. Instead, it is indicative of the Mitscherlichs' claim that for many Germans such a thorough and honest portrayal of the past wasn't possible. This suggests that not only would Germans have been unable to apply the lessons of a balanced film to their own lives, but that Käutner himself was psychologically incapable of making one. Whether this is true, only Käutner (and his analyst) knows for sure. But, if his didactics were focused on Germany's reconstruction, the omissions Käutner made ostensibly to facilitate it are exactly those that seem most likely to allow (or at least not prevent) the reemergence of fascism.

### **Maetzig's *Ehe im Schatten***

By almost any measure Kurt Maetzig's directorial debut, *Ehe im Schatten*, was a more successful film than *In jenen Tagen*. The film opened simultaneously in all four military zones—

it was the only film to accomplish this—and within weeks had been viewed 10 million times. The following year, it earned Germany's top film honor, the Bambi, for best film. This is owed, if not solely to Maetzig's budding directorial abilities, then perhaps in part to the positive, almost revolutionary climate at DEFA, whose commitment to making high-quality, politically-engaged films at that time was evident from the previous year's *Die Mörder sind unter uns*. Although political tensions would limit DEFA's commitment to antifascist film to just a few years, *Ehe im Schatten* was made at the height of DEFA's commitment to *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, before Cold War influence led to an antagonistic portrayal of their ideologically opposed *other*.

A second explanation for the film's success lies perhaps in the way its director and actors personally identified with it. The screenplay is based on a novella by director and screenwriter Hans Schweikart, *Es wird schon nicht so schlimm*, which depicts the real life tragedy of actor Joachim Gottschalk and his wife. Persecuted for being a so-called *Mischehe*—much like that shown in Episode Three of *In jenen Tagen*—actor Joachim Gottschalk, and his wife, Meta, along with their child, Michael, committed suicide in 1941. Maetzig did not know the Gottschalk's personally, but was himself the son of a half-Jewish couple, and understood the suffering that such families endured:

Die Novelle hat mich mächtig angesprochen. Ich empfand eine tiefe Entsprechung zu dem, was ich selber gefühlt und durchlebt hatte. Und es gab dabei eigentlich noch einen Grund, über den es mir—ehrlich gesagt—schwerfällt zu sprechen. Aber er war doch ein wesentlicher Antrieb für den Film: Meine Eltern haben sich nicht in gleicher Weise verhalten wie die Familie Gottschalk, das heißt, sie sind nicht mit aller Konsequenz bis zum bitteren Ende zusammengeblieben, sondern sie haben sich im gegenseitigen Einvernehmen und pro forma scheiden lassen. ... Ich glaube, der Film ist deshalb auch nicht nur ein Gespräch mit dem Zuschauer, sondern ein wenig auch eine Polemik mit meinem Vater geworden. Meine Mutter hat später auf der Flucht vor der Gestapo ihr Leben selbst beendet (Maetzig 35).

Many of the film's stars had either known the Gottschalk's or people like them, while others in the film had experienced Nazi persecution firsthand. Actor Alfred Balthoff practically portrayed

his own life's experience in the role of Kurt Bernstein (Mückenberger 75), a Jewish actor who flees Germany for Vienna, is forcibly returned and survives a series of concentration camps by escaping and living underground. Likewise Willy Prager, who played the role of a Jewish doctor who refuses to emigrate and is ultimately forced underground as well (*Ibid.*).

The film tells the story of fictional actress Elisabeth Maurer, who is talented and successful, and also Jewish. When the Nazis come to power, she remains in Berlin, intent on continuing her life as normal. Many of her friends convince her, as they tell her and themselves, that, "It won't be so bad." Elisabeth marries a fellow actor, Hans Wieland, who has long courted her, and her status as part of a "mixed marriage" affords her some safety in an already hostile environment. It does not, however, allow her to work or have any activity in public society and her life becomes increasingly restricted to the point that she leads only a prison-like existence in her apartment, leaving only for mandatory work at a loading dock or to receive her ration cards. Ultimately, even these are denied her, and rather than be deported, she and her husband poison themselves, dying in each other's arms.

While this is the story's plot in all brevity, beneath its core lie the dramatic tension of fear and uncertainty as well as supporting characters who add a great degree of depth and nuance to the story. Much like the predominant relationship in *In jenen Tagen*, a love triangle is the film's principle relationship structure.

As the film begins, Elisabeth has two admirers—Hans, with whom she has just starred in a production of Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, and Dr. Herbert Blohm, a publisher. Several cues indicate that Blohm is her favorite: Elisabeth kindly rejects Hans' advances when he tries to kiss her, but gladly spends the day in Blohm's arms when he takes her sailing. Later, when both men appear at her doorstep, Elisabeth rushes to embrace Blohm, but, upon realizing that he is not

alone, she composes herself to greet Hans, even recoiling slightly. After 27 minutes of exposition Elisabeth's preference for Blohm ends—she rejects him because he joins the Nazi Party—although no similar development explains her positive change of heart for Hans. The effect of such a long introduction extends well beyond the purpose of narrative. First, it casts Elisabeth as a desirable woman in her private sphere to complement her image as a beloved actress in the public sphere. In the film's opening scene at the end of their last performance of *Kabale und Liebe*, she receives a standing ovation as the audience cheers her name. Backstage, well-wishers offer her gifts—an artist has sketched her portrait, and Blohm gives her a book. To balance these images of her professional desirability, the scenes showing both men courting her establish that she has the personal qualities of someone worth loving. The second purpose of the long exposition is to establish Hans and Blohm as equals. Elisabeth views them on a personal level as equally qualified suitors, and this arrangement serves to set each man as the other's foil as the film's political message is developed.

While Elisabeth is clearly the film's chief protagonist, Hans and Blohm serve as strong didactic vehicles. Hans is a virtuous, compassionate *Mensch* in the classic Käutner sense: although he has been romantically interested in Elisabeth from the beginning of the film, it is only after a Jewish wardrobe assistant at the theater tells him that she is safe from Nazi persecution, because her man is an “Aryan,” that he asks Elisabeth when they are going to get married.

HANS (asking abruptly): Wann heiraten wir?

ELISABETH (looks at Hans, astonished)

HANS: Ja, Elisabeth, wir werden heiraten, wir hätten es längst tun sollen, schon in Hiddensee wollte ich es dir sagen.

ELISABETH: Ich bringe dir Unglück!

HANS: Aber nein, Elisabeth, du bringst mir kein Unglück. Schau, Elisabeth, wir lieben uns doch.

ELISABETH: Ja!

While he may love her, Hans' reference to Hiddensee is unconvincing. It was at Hiddensee that Elisabeth refused even to kiss him, and the following day, when Elisabeth and Blohm are out sailing and Bernstein asks Hans if he doesn't mind, Hans answers, "Wieso? Das ist Elisabeths Sache. Sie kann tun, was sie will." These are hardly the words of a man intent on marriage, even if his anxious whittling hints that he doesn't entirely mean them. Much later in the film, Elisabeth, having become increasingly frustrated with the constraints of her situation, accuses Hans of marrying her out of his sense of propriety (*Anständigkeit*). While there are scenes where the two profess they deeply love one another, Maetzig leaves just enough room for doubt to create a sense that Hans has jeopardized his career and safety at least partly for humanitarian reasons.

Inasmuch as Hans is a *Mensch* in the positive sense, he fits the negative aspects of Käutner's model as well in proclaiming his utter detachment from the political sphere. During a debate on contemporary, German politics at Blohm's beach house, Hans describes his political philosophy, "Ich halte nicht viel vom Willen zur Macht. Menschlichkeit würde man propagieren." And, when Blohm claims that artists will be particularly well off under the Nazis, Hans admits, "Ich kümmere mich nur um meinen Beruf, und das ist vielleicht auch ganz gut so."

This disinterest contrasts starkly with the politically-engaged Blohm, whose gift to Elisabeth of Nietzsche's *Der Wille zur Macht* would have been a clear indication to contemporary viewers that he is a Nazi (Shandley 82). At the beach house, Blohm explains that he is hopeful the Nazis will usher in a golden age and is confident the party's radicals will give way to reason once the Nazis have power. Because his relationship with Elisabeth has coded him as a positive figure, Blohm's excitement is convincing and appears to be borne entirely of

anticipated opportunity, but he makes choices throughout the film that are increasingly indicative of opportunism.

On a visit to Elisabeth's apartment shortly after their return from Hiddensee, Blohm excitedly reports that he has been offered a position in the Ministry of Culture. Elisabeth is shocked that he would take the job, but Blohm assures her that nothing will change between them, adding that perhaps they can falsify her papers to change her ethnicity. Without noticing how disturbed she is by his suggestion, Blohm reaches in his wallet to retrieve photos from the trip when a Nazi Party pin falls out. Not surprisingly, Elisabeth is shocked:

ELISABETH (in carefully measured speech): Ja, Herbert, weißt du denn, was das bedeutet?

BLOHM: Für den einzelnen hat das gar keine Bedeutung. Im Gegenteil, erst dadurch erhalte ich den richtigen Einfluß, verstehst du, ich kann Übergriffe verhindern. Und du weißt doch, nie im Leben würde ich mich dazu hergeben, etwas zu tun, was anständigen Menschen schaden könnte.

Blohm's tone sounds uncertain, almost as if he is trying to convince himself as much as Elisabeth, but gradually becomes more assured when he argues that the persecution of the Jews is focused only on some disagreeables from the East. He tries to comfort her, claiming, "Es wird nicht so schlimm," but Elisabeth is crestfallen. Blohm leaves and she closes her eyes in sorrow, not just at the loss of a trusted friend, but perhaps at the realization that someone so dear had fallen victim to the Nazi's base propaganda.

Blohm's morality continues to devolve in limited scenes throughout the film. When an actor acquaintance, Gallenkamp, reports that he spotted Bernstein—who is a fugitive at this point in the film—and asks whether he should report him to the Gestapo, Blohm tries to avoid the question by saying that it is not a concern of the Ministry of Culture. Gallenkamp presses, asking Blohm if he knows Bernstein and what he—Gallenkamp—should do about it. Blohm is visibly agitated at being presented with this moral dilemma, failing even to answer the first

question. About the second, he can only admonish Gallenkamp to do his duty, chiding him for having not reported Bernstein to the Gestapo immediately. The emotional weight of this exchange is heightened by two separate allusions to the Passion play: First, Blohm plays a Pilate figure in claiming that he has no authority over the matters that Gellencamp is pursuing. Second, Blohm's refusal to answer whether he knows Bernstein alludes to Peter's denial of Christ, as both men refused to admit knowing innocent friends for fear of endangering themselves. While I do not mean to take these references too far, they strengthen Bernstein's portrayal as a blameless victim, which in turn serves to contrast Blohm as increasingly malevolent.

With each successive scene, Blohm makes morally wrong choices, each one worse than the last. Where he once beamed at the prospect of an ideal society, his opportunism gradually robs him of all moral propriety, a state reflected by the permanent frown he wears at the film's climax: a showdown between former friends (and rival suitors) Hans and Blohm. Blohm's moral bankruptcy plays against Hans' unflagging commitment to virtue when Blohm reveals that Elisabeth is to be deported and that neither of them can save her. He proposes that Hans save himself by agreeing to divorce Elisabeth. The scene shows just how far Blohm has degenerated, given his unwillingness to act against the regime for the sake of a woman he once loved. It also shows Hans' commitment to both Elisabeth and moral principle. Not only does Hans denounce Blohm and his plan, but he blames himself and all disengaged artists for their political situation: "Aber wir sind ja selbst schuld, dass es uns so geht. Wir haben uns nie um Politik gekümmert, wir haben immer geglaubt, es wird schon nicht so schlimm und wir könnten uns der Verantwortung als einzelne, als Künstler, entziehen, wir sind ja genauso schuldig wie Sie." Where Käutner's *In jenen Tagen*, encouraged viewers to draw their own conclusions through

subtle suggestion, Maetzig leaves no doubt as to whom he feels bears responsibility for the past and he uses his characters to explicitly say so.

Two other characters give the film additional depth by providing contrast for Elisabeth: fellow actor Kurt Bernstein and her uncle, Dr. Louis Silbermann. These men serve primarily as a manifestation of Elisabeth's tug-of-war indecisiveness over whether to flee Germany. Elisabeth is shown to have no political sensibilities early in the film when she, Hans, Blohm and Bernstein vacation at Blohm's beach house in Hiddensee. While the men discuss the rapidly evolving political situation in Germany, Elisabeth sleeps on a nearby couch, oblivious to their debating. Her political unawareness prevents her from making a decision and leaves her trapped between two opposite opinions about which she knows little.

Bernstein flees early in the film but returns later to stoke Elisabeth's thoughts that she should emigrate as well. He fears the worst from the start, showing a nearly clairvoyant apprehension even if he can't exactly imagine how the dangers ahead will manifest themselves. At Blohm's beach house, he argues against the Nazis as radicals, contending that Germany needs a "clear head" over a "strong hand" and the next morning by the beach his fears are confirmed when the group witnesses the erection of a sign reading, "Juden unerwünscht!" Bernstein sadly supposes that he will never see Hiddensee again, while a man uses an axe to pound the sign into the ground, grimly foreshadowing the future. Later in the story, immediately after the scene when Elisabeth rejects Blohm, the camera cuts to Bernstein's apartment where he is packing his belongings, preparing to emigrate to Vienna—his departure signals Elisabeth's own, though still unstated, inclinations to flee. When Elisabeth and Hans see Bernstein off at the train station, he pleads with them to accompany him, but they decline, and Elisabeth repeats the words that Blohm had assured her, "Es wird nicht so schlimm."

At the opposite pole from Bernstein is Dr. Silbermann, an integrated Jew whose love of Germany's culture and whose commitment to the needs of his patients compels him to stay. Silbermann is shown to be as "German" as anyone as evidenced by a number of deliberately staged scenes. On the occasion of Elisabeth and Hans' fifth wedding anniversary, he proposes a toast that recalls the thematic question central to *In jenen Tagen*, "Halte dich nur im Stillen rein und laß es um dich wettern, je mehr du fühlst, ein Mensch zu sein, um so näher bist du den Göttern..." to which Elisabeth explains to the audience as much as to her guests, that he always quotes Goethe. Later, when Silbermann laments being forbidden to attend the theater, he shrugs it off, concluding that it has allowed him more time to read the classics. He is as deeply rooted in his community as he is in his society, and, as much as he trusts the land of Goethe and Schiller to maintain dignity and honor for all men, he trusts his patients will protect him. When, in a scene in Silbermann's office, Bernstein expresses his wish to leave Germany due to the increasingly anti-Semitic atmosphere, Silbermann answers, "Wenn ihr von Demonstrationen gegen die Juden sprecht, dann will ich euch auch einmal eine Demonstration für die Juden zeigen." He then opens his waiting room door to reveal that it is full of working class patients, adding in a version of the now familiar mantra, "Die haben auch noch ein Wort mitzureden, da kann es nicht so schlimm werden."

But indeed it does get that bad. After Austria's annexation, Bernstein is arrested trying to cross into Switzerland. While being transferred between camps from Mauthausen to Oranienberg, he jumps from the train and begins an underground, marginalized existence. When Hans hears about his misadventures, he responds almost callously, intending to convince Elisabeth to stay, "Aber siehst du, so geht's den Emigranten!" For Elisabeth and viewers, the

message of Bernstein's fate is that escape is impossible, a reality that she and Bernstein separately describe as the feeling of being trapped by an avalanche.

Silbermann's medical practice is increasingly restricted, first he is limited to seeing only Jewish patients, and then, after the Jewish patients have been deported, he is expected to follow them. Instead, he goes underground using much the same network as Bernstein. When he visits Elisabeth's apartment to tell her he is safe, their meeting is interrupted by air raid sirens, and Elisabeth tells her uncle that she must wait to go to the basement until everyone else in the building has descended. When they exchange goodbyes, the viewer sees that even this slight indignity is minor in comparison to what Dr. Silbermann suffers, as he is not even afforded the right to shelter—the camera tracks beside him to a bombed-out corner, where he stops and stands solemnly in the shadows. There, he can only barely be seen, suggesting a visual metaphor of his marginalization as he disappears into the night and out of the film. Except for Bernstein explaining to Elisabeth that some compassionate people provided him a suit so that he could change out of his conspicuous prison clothes, Maetzig shows little of the humanitarians who risk their own safety to provide shelter and aid these persecuted men. Doing so would interrupt the viewer's identification with Elisabeth as her freedom becomes increasingly constricted. Late in the film, she recounts a nightmare to Hans where a giant net descends on her—having seen that she cannot escape and that even the most assimilated Jews cannot stay, her fears are well founded.

Amid these male characters, Elisabeth remains the film's focus throughout. She is framed in medium-close shots to strengthen the viewer's identification with her (Shandley 82). And, while the film's title suggests that Hans will figure equally in the narrative, his tour of military service is signified first by his absence and then, upon his discharge for having contracted

typhus, only by a uniform. Shandley attributes the focus on Elisabeth to the large number of contemporary, female movie-goers (88-89), but complains that the subtle portrayal of her ethnicity obscures the film's portrayal of Jewish persecution: "Viewers may be moved by the wrongness of the Nazi persecution of the Jews *or* by the sentimental tale of two lovers dying in each other's arms. The effect may well have been the same as if Elisabeth had died of cancer" (84). While he is correct in observing that little separates Elisabeth from non-Jewish characters in the film, his complaint intimates an expectation that she engage in some unspecified, stereotypically Jewish activity to heighten her credibility. I would suggest, however, that Jewish oppression is effectively portrayed through the foil characters Silbermann and Bernstein. An attempt to make the story's central character more Jewish—whatever that means—would have risked distancing the viewer in their identification with her. Additionally, by limiting any characteristics that would have distanced viewers, her crime of "Jewishness" appears arbitrary and thus all the more unjust.

Lastly, it is important to remember that this was Germany's first postwar feature film to focus on Jewish persecution, and, as Shandley himself explains, its producers simply did not know how audiences would react to such an emotionally charged topic (86). Given that the cinematic image many Germans had of Jews had largely been shaped by negative portrayals such as that of the title character in *Jud Süß* (1940),<sup>61</sup> there was considerable apprehension that viewers would identify with a Jewish protagonist. Ultimately, however, Maetzig struck the right balance, leading one columnist to review, "Die stärkste Wirkung geht aber von der jüdischen

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<sup>61</sup> I do not mean to give the impression that *Jud Süß* was singular in its negative portrayal of Jews. On the contrary, unflattering (or worse) portrayals are evident as far back as Paul Wegener's *Der Golem* (1915). Nevertheless the fascist rise to power exacerbated such portrayals. Mückenberger notes, "Der Faschismus hatte es geschafft: Veit Harlan's Version des >>Jud Süß<< Oppenheimer war für Millionen zum Synonym des Juden geworden (77).

Frau aus, einer bislang Unbekannten; wir tun gut, uns ihren Namen zu merken: Ilse Steppat“ (Bessen 154).

### Comparative Analysis

Owing either to the conditions under which they were made, the people who made them, the screenplays themselves, or most likely a combination of all three, *Ehe im Schatten* is a superior *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* film to *In jenen Tagen*. Although “superior” and any other qualitative assessments are subjective, I mean that it appears—when observed through the lens of fifty years of history by an American graduate student—to address the issues of the Nazi past in ways that more closely correspond to the suggestions and concerns expressed by Jaspers, the Mitscherlichs, and Adorno, and in ways that more closely approximate the intentions of contemporary denazification and democratization. To be sure, the pressures and limitations exerted by the contemporary socio-psychological and socio-political influences discussed in *Parts I* and *II* made producing *any* film about the immediate past a tremendous accomplishment.

Kurt Maetzig operated under conditions of relatively unlimited, artistic freedom where films were posited early as a fundamental part of democratization in which the Germans themselves were to participate. Although “partnership” between filmmakers and the Soviet administrators is perhaps too strong a characterization, it is a world apart from the limitations placed on Helmut Käutner by Western administrators. Shandley explains that, “...OMGUS rules were restrictive in word, but often quite liberal in enforcement. Thus filmmakers had little indication as to what would and would not be allowed” (24). Such ambiguity, coupled with the American film industry’s maneuverings for market share, and compounded by Western fears that film might again be used to propagate fascism could only have stifled artistic expression in film in the Western zone.

Despite these conditions, Käutner was able to assemble an extraordinary cast—I do not mean in the sense of their acting abilities, which were fine, but in the quality of their personal backgrounds. Käutner assembled actors who had been successful under the Nazi regime—Werner Hinz, Hans Nielsen and Karl John—the first two of whom, somewhat ironically, play persecuted characters in the film, as well as actors who, for racial or political reasons, had been personally victimized by the Nazis—Ida Ehre, Isa Vermehren, Erwin Geschonnek and Bettina Moissi (Witte 89). That actors with such vastly different experiences were able to overcome any resentment they felt to make a film aimed at spurring hope for Germany was as strong a message as any of the film's narrative elements. This weighty gesture of reconciliation touched not only professionals within the film industry but also served as an inspiration to those who viewed the film. No similar story is to be found behind the camera on Maetzig's set, perhaps owing to employment limitations imposed by DEFA or its Soviet/SED leadership (*Ibid.*). In any case, while such an assembly of varied backgrounds makes for good, anecdotal reading, it lies subordinate to the screenplay itself.

With its format of seven independent episodes, Käutner's film allows only the sketchiest of character portrayals, making it difficult for viewers to identify with the characters and yet more difficult to feel much sympathy for them. Moreover, once an episode concludes, there is little need for viewers to recall old characters and their situations—once the episode ends, so too does the viewer's conscious memory of them. The “disposability” of each episode in turn fosters a disinclination to expend the mental energy of learning new characters and situations as the film relentlessly progresses. Lastly, reliance of *In jenen Tagen* on flashbacks to move the story between the car's narration and the episodes interrupts the film's digetic continuity. With each interruption, viewers are pulled from the cinematic illusion, preventing them from remaining

“ensutured” into the film’s narrative and enjoying the psychological escape that is movie-going’s chief pleasure.

By contrast, *Ehe im Schatten* focuses on five characters who appear throughout the course of the film, particularly Elisabeth and Hans, with whom the viewer is urged to sympathize. Becker and Schöll note that identification is a consistent difference between films of the eastern and western occupation zones, “Es [gibt] schließlich noch den Unterschied, dass der Zuschauer bei den ersten neben dem (Wieder)Erkennen sich mit dem Protagonisten auch identifizieren soll, um so mit ihm einen Lernprozeß durchzumachen; westdeutsche Filme beschränken sich in einigen Fällen auf das (Wieder)Erkennen und Nachvollziehen der (Zeit-)Geschichte und der Geschichten“ (108). In addition to the use of medium-close shots to foster viewer identification with Elisabeth, Maetzig allots the film’s first thirty minutes to developing her, Hans, Blohm, Kurt and the relationships between them. This is an exceptionally long time, given that directors typically introduce their plot within the film’s first seven to fifteen minutes (Haselauer 50). The results, however, are the development of effective foils and a stronger, more resonant, political message. It is through these foils—Hans against Blohm; and, though less important to the narrative, but still critical in portraying Elisabeth, Silbermann against Bernstein—that the film answers the questions that *In jenen Tagen* ignored. Shandley disagrees, arguing that “it is hard to make the claim that this narrative actually marks any ethical transformation at all” (84), but he focuses this section of his analysis solely on Elisabeth and, although he acknowledges the other characters’ thematic roles, he doesn’t appreciate their didactic significance.

Regarding Hans and Blohm, their friendship at the beginning casts Blohm as a respectable, normal man. Consequently, his moral descent appears more realistic and more

suitable for didactic inference in addressing the question of how fascism gained so much political and social momentum. Maetzig casts a person where Käutner only presents “those days.” Dr. Herbert Blohm is believable and, while his actions are not excusable, the viewer can see how he arrives at them. Likewise, the political indifference Hans Wieland casually expresses at the beach house seems at worst distracted self-interest. At the film’s climax, however, he indicts himself and all Germans like him for not doing enough to prevent fascism, accusing, “wir sind ja selbst schuld!” Certainly, by risking and ultimately forfeiting his life, Hans absolutely resists the Nazi regime in his private sphere—much as those in Käutner’s film do—but, as Jaspers noted, it is in the public sphere where citizens bear the burden of political responsibility.

Each film ends with images specifically intended to stay with the viewer long after the credits have rolled. What each director selected for that image says much about the message they intended their film to send. In *In jenen Tagen*, Käutner underscores the series of hope-filled, inspirational dialogs that bring the movie to its close by panning across the same junkyard he showed in the film’s establishing shot. This time, though, the camera stops half way, and blends to a close-up of a few, small, budding flowers that have emerged from the rubble. The music is grand, but not quite majestic, intending to stir viewers to action, that is, to act compassionately in ways that evoke the seven examples they have just seen in the film. I’ve suggested already that, because western administrators had already demonstrated the ineffectiveness of showing negative portrayals of the past, Käutner knew better than to make a film with ninety minutes of finger pointing. But there is simply no accountability for the past in his film and, consequently, no model for reconstruction —beyond *Menschlichkeit*—to ensure fascism would not reemerge. Instead the film’s seven episodes foster a particular whitewashing that so strongly reinforces Germany’s compassionate *Menschen* that it appears very few other

people existed. Instead, the car's last words—"Denken Sie daran, wenn Sie an Ihre Arbeit gehen..."—coupled with the flower's symbolism of rebirth and future growth, support many Germans' preoccupation with the *Wirtschaftswunder*. Twenty years later, the Mitscherlichs observed exactly this tendency, writing, "Psychologisches Interesse für die Motive, die uns zu Anhängern eines Führers werden ließen, der uns zur größten materiellen und moralischen Katastrophe unserer Geschichte führte...haben wir nur wenig entwickelt... Alle unsere Energie haben wir vielmehr mit einem Bewunderung und Neid erweckenden Unternehmungsgeist auf die Wiederherstellung des Zerstörten, auf Ausbau und Modernisierung...konzentriert" (19). I am more inclined to believe that Käutner shared a similar psychological profile with many Germans in writing the screenplay, than the possibility that Käutner's approach to the past was itself responsible for shaping how many Germans remembered it.

Maetzig's closing shot could not be more different from Käutner's hopeful flowers. The penultimate scene shows Hans and Elisabeth drinking coffee that Hans has poisoned—death is their only escape from the Nazis, who will be coming shortly to deport Elisabeth. As they lie together in each other's arms, the scene fades to a cemetery, where two black coffins are solemnly carried away from the camera toward their plots. Maetzig has placed the camera at waist level or a little lower and aimed it directly at the coffins, so that, combined with the pallbearers and the cemetery's trees, the frame is crowded with dark figures, creating a sense of choking hopelessness. A superimposed dedication blends in, filling the screen, "Dieser Film ist dem Andenken des Schauspielers Joachim Gottschalk gewidmet, der im Herbst 1941 mit seiner Familie in den Tod getrieben wurde, und mit ihm zugleich all denen, die als Opfer fielen." Having placed responsibility for how fascism arose—through political disengagement—and shown what its horrific consequences were—the deaths of talented, innocent, sympathetic

people—Maetzig sears the image of their coffins into the viewer's memory. To prevent the reemergence of fascism in the world, the world must remember what its consequences are, and in this sense, Maetzig's film intends to serve as at least part of the civic education Adorno prescribes (Adorno 568).

Adorno also, however, cautions against the presentation of past Jewish accomplishments to combat anti-Semitism, "Hinweise etwa auf die große Leistungen von Juden in der Vergangenheit, so wahr sie auch sein mögen, nützen kaum viel, sondern schmecken nach Propaganda" (570). In this regard, Maetzig may have worked so hard to gain sympathy for his characters, that the film's aesthetics obscured the message. Brecht is said to have called *Ehe im Schatten* "sentimental kitsch," and there are a number of scenes where the film relies too heavily on melodrama or coarse cinematic technique to manipulate viewer emotion. The beach scene where a windswept Elisabeth greets the sea quoting Goethe is evidence of the former. Examples of the latter are to be seen in two separate scenes in the apartment where Elisabeth, feeling alone and increasingly isolated, is shown under a series of lines of shadows from her barred window, communicating too obviously her de facto imprisonment. A last example: while Hans waits outside Blohm's office before their confrontation, he sits on a lone chair, backed against a broad, white wall. Against the wall, a large cross has formed from the shadow of the windowpane, foreshadowing the sacrifice that he is about to make for Elisabeth. These techniques are too heavy-handed to go unnoticed and detract from an otherwise effective production. Had Maetzig taken a more restrained approach, particularly with regard to aesthetics, his film might be even better regarded.

## Conclusion

In April, the Lincoln Center is hosting a film festival entitled, "After the War, Before the Wall: German Cinema, 1945-60," which will feature 31 films from Germany's first two, postwar periods, the Rubble Years and its successor, Homeland (*Heimat*) films. Spanning just three weeks, the festival will show films of all genres in an effort to provide a wide survey, but does so at the expense of presenting any one central theme. Eric Rentschler, who selected the films, had to choose from among the nearly 1,500 that were made over the fifteen years following the war (Blumenthal). Käutner's *In jenen Tagen* was selected, but Maetzig's *Ehe im Schatten* was not. Because the festival averages to just two films for each year covered by the festival, the selections are only broadly representative of postwar German cinema. Imagine, fifty years from now, a film festival portraying post-Persian Gulf War, American society by showing *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991) and Oliver Stones' *JFK* (1991). Although there are obvious differences between the two wars, the times and each country's film industries, my example intends to show how a lack of representative depth could result in misperceptions (and at just the moment when the Rubble Films stand to reach a wider, non-academic audience).

Just such a misperception appears in Ralph Blumenthal's before-the-festival review for the *Times*, in which he criticizes the Rubble Years period for focusing "...largely on the miseries the Germans suffered rather than those they inflicted." This impression is generally true, but not without important caveats. Some of this would be mitigated by including more films, such as *Ehe im Schatten*, as well as by recalling the conditions of the times—particularly the psychological economies of many Germans and the reeducation policies of military administrators. In this context, a film whose message is that "humanity will go on" does not seem like such a bad thing at all. In the face of so much disillusionment, conflicted feelings, and

uncertainty about the future, such messages of hope may have been just what many Germans needed to persevere. Many critics indicate the need to continually recall the past as the primary lesson of fascism and the war. Certainly, I agree that coming to terms with the past is a process that all people must incorporate into their moral foundations in order to prevent such a disaster from reoccurring, but it is unrealistic to expect this to be the theme of all Rubble Films. How directors selected their themes—as well as how administrators selected their directors—provides a second lesson about the past, though one more aimed at occupiers than the occupied.

This paper was funded by the United States Army, whose guidance was to write on a topic that might be of use to the government, and I believe I have in the event the United States ever reconstructs a country to the degree they endeavored to help reconstruct Germany. SMAD officials took a collaborative approach with filmmakers and accepted cinema as a positive means to reeducate, resulting in films that generally encourage the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. By contrast, the tendency by OMGUS administrators to view films and filmmakers with distrust inadvertently impeded efforts to make films with politically significant messages. It is not so simple as saying, “Next time, trust people more,” or, “Be sure the films have themes about remembering what caused that past, so the disaster of war doesn’t happen again.” Rather, successful reconstruction requires first an admission to oneself that any nation is capable of causing tragedy. And, second, it requires compassion. Beyond that, it is no simpler to prescribe how to reconstruct a film industry than it is fair to suggest, much as Mr. Blumenthal has, that it could have been done better.

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## Appendix

### Jaspers' Four Categories of Responsibility

		Who is accused?	Who has jurisdiction/ who accuses?	Consequences of Guilt
<b>Criminal</b>	The relative few who committed crimes (10)	Courts—whether military tribunals or German (10)	Punishment (14)	
	All are responsible for the actions of their government (10)	The victor, whether in domestic or foreign politics (10)	Reparations, loss or reduction of political power and rights (14)	
<b>Political</b>	The individual (10)	From within		
	All of humanity who survives an injustice (11)	My own conscience, those who care about me (10)	Growth of Insight leading to penance and renewal (14)	
<b>Moral</b>	God (11)	From within	Transformation of human self-consciousness before God (14)	
<b>Metaphysical</b>				